



UNDEFEATED
BAHAMUT
CHRONICLE
最弱無敗の

神装機龍

15

明月千里
SENRI AKATSUKI
春日歩
ARUMU
KASUGA

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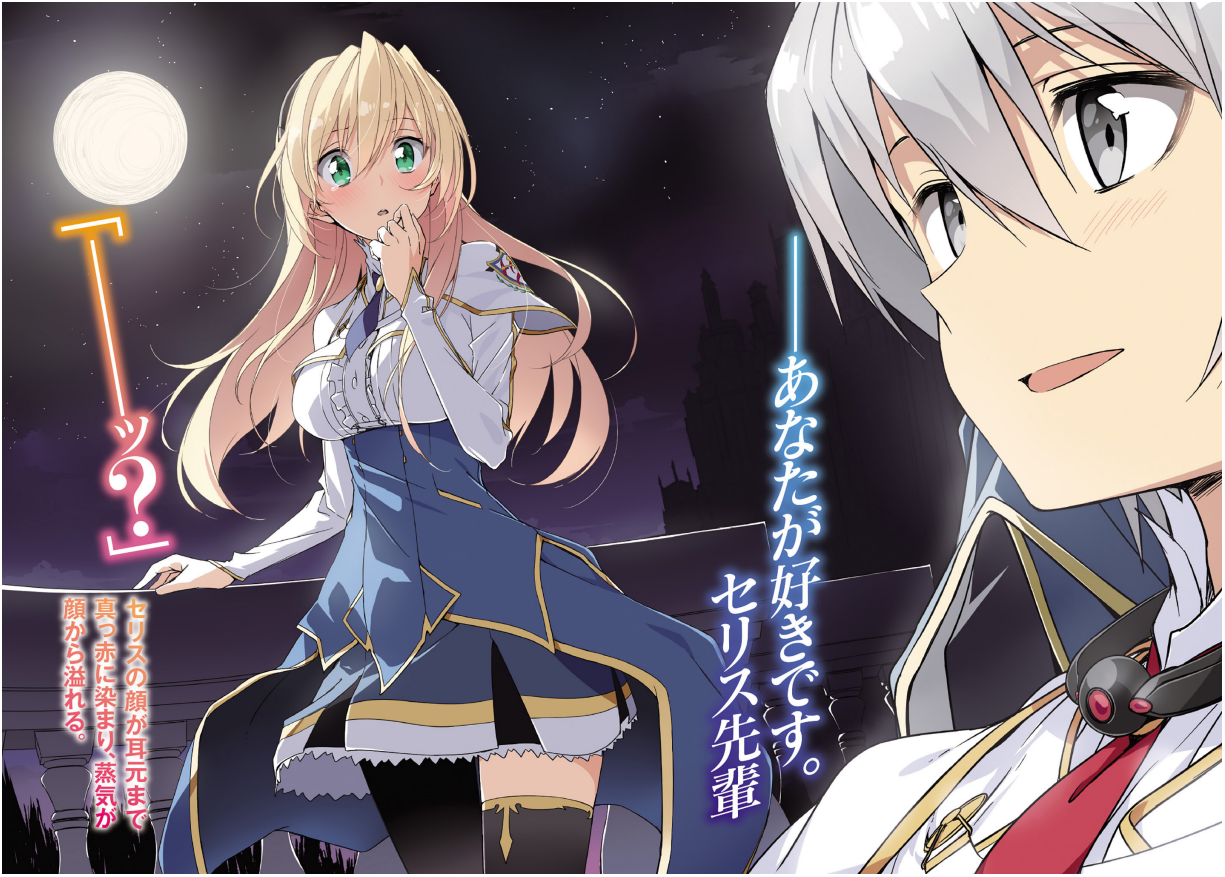


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——あなたが好きです。
セリス先輩

↑ツッぽ

セリスの顔が耳元まで
真っ赤に染まり、蒸気が
顔から溢れる。



Prologue – Unceasingly Resounding Reverberation

A rumble of the ground that was sounded like groans was reverberating in the sky above the old castle.

The abandoned capital Guernica in the Marcafal Kingdom.

The burned down rampart and the heaps of broken rubble.

In that place where white smoke was rising up from the remains of the flames of war, two factions were confronting each other.

Many warriors shed their blood on this land in the dispute for the right to obtain the legacy of the Lords, Avalon.

And then now, the last remaining forces were going to clash.

On one side was the Seven Dragon Paladins who were affiliated with the world alliance, led by Magialca Zen Vanfrick.

The orange haired girl who was clad with the Divine Drag-Ride Jormundgandr was directing a bold gaze towards the enemy even in this appalling battlefield.

She was showing a unique battle stance through the particular shape of her Drag-Ride that possessed seven arms while speaking out.

"Avalon will activate in ten more minutes and then the reorganization of the world or something will begin, that was what you said right, Fugil—self-proclaimed hero?"

"....."

Fugil who was wearing Bahamut 200 ml ahead of Magialca didn't say anything.

There was no change to his composed smile. His grey pupils were staring at the surroundings.

The two corpses lying under his feet were the Lord Listelka, who should be the legitimate successor of Avalon, and the Key's Supervisor Mishis.

The man who should be the one to wake them up from their sleep inside the hibernation pod on the Ark and guided them until this far, betrayed and killed his master at this final stage.

".....Everyone, be, careful"

Lux who was lying down far at the rear recovered his consciousness and stared at that scene distantly.

He squeezed out a hoarse voice and spoke out to the comrades who would challenge the decisive battle from here on.

But, his voice naturally didn't reach.

Even so, he exerted his strength to reach out his hand and stand up.

Lux who once fought Fugil and witnessed a glimpse of his true strength understood, why Fugil preferred to use Bahamut.

How this man was standing in an unreachable height as a Drag-Knight.

And also how merciless he was in eliminating those who obstructed his mission.

—

[—A hero opposes fate and wishes for salvation. A hero is the ally of the weak.]

—

Five years ago. The man who was Lux's big brother, Fugil said those words to him.

Lux understood the true meaning of those words.

No—just now, he scooped out the meaning from the depths of his completely forgotten memory.

However, he already had no spare strength to convey that.

—

"I have also investigated about you for a bit since some time ago, but in the end my information network didn't get anything. I have the interest but no time. I'll listen to your story while all of us are toying with you."

Magialca's eyes silently narrowed and her lips curved wickedly.

Aeril and the Seven Dragon Paladins shrunk their encirclement in response to her words.

"—Here I come-!"

The sullen looking blonde young man wearing the Divine Drag-Ride Cuelebre, Greifer Nest, flew forward with a yell.

He brandished his special armament, the jointed sword Tail Blade and swung it with an arcing trajectory.

At the same time he activated his Divine Raiment Photon Dive. In his invincible state, he advanced without fear of the Quick Shot that could come from Fugil's Bahamut.

But, Fugil didn't activate Bahamut's Reload on Fire and deflected Greifer's attack with his greatsword.

Fugil parried the tip of the Tail Blade while he himself was moving to Greifer's left side.

He changed the way he held his special armament Chaos Brand and slashed at Cuelebre's back wings.

But, that slash was easily deflected and Fugil along with Bahamut got sent flying backward.

".....Hah! That's pointless! As long as Photon Dive is activated, any attack to me is pointless from the start!"

Cuelebre, that was enveloped in phosphorescence, diffused the impact to the surroundings so it wouldn't receive any attack.

Also, Greifer had a spare time of several more seconds until that Divine Raiment stopped working.

".....Reload on Fire"

But, the instant Greifer was going to pursue, Fugil's Bahamut was enveloped with crimson light.

Right after Greifer saw that, a shudder that made his hair stand on ends went through his body.

"—!?"

Greifer immediately changed the trajectory of his flying and took a distance of several dozen ml.

Mel Gizalut who saw that raised an exasperated voice.

"Why are you getting cold feet like that. Your Divine Raiment can still continue right? Or perhaps you are unable to have faith in our support?"

"It's astonishing to see such actions from a man whose principle is to make reckless challenges, you know."

Rosa further made fun of Greifer. Soffice was going to continue after her, but then she shut her mouth.

She noticed that Greifer was trickling a lot of sweat even though he hadn't received any actual attack.

"Was there something? Greifer?"

"Who knows, I don't get it at all. It was just my instinct, no—I finally got it after thinking for a bit. Why I took distance from that guy."

After several seconds, Greifer verbalized the feeling of unease that welled up from inside himself.

"It was precisely five seconds before. The timing when that guy activated Reload on Fire matched the remaining time when the effect of my Photon Dive would run out."

The compression strengthening of Bahamut's Divine Raiment drastically decreased the energy and phenomenon in the first five seconds, and then doubled them in the next five seconds.

For example in the case that it was time that was accelerated, the user would be able to move with double the speed in the next five seconds.

"Greifer's Photon Dive that gives him invincibility would be turned off just at the right timing when Fugil will become able to move at high speed. You got alerted by that perfect timing and stopped from pursuing too deep, is that right?"

"Yeah....."

Greifer consented to Aeryl's question without hesitation.

The remaining Seven Dragon Paladins understood the situation from the two's conversation and held their breath.

Fugil pretended to be unbalanced to lure Greifer so he would be able to finish him off.

Photon Dive's activation period should be different for each individual, but Fugil saw through it perfectly and formed a scheme to unleash Quick Shot from Reload on Fire. They strengthened their vigilance once more after realizing that.

"....."

Greifer nodded in agreement to what Aeril pointed out, but actually he was half mistaken.

If it was Greifer who was called as the Covetous Wolf with his belligerent and rash personality, he would surely keep charging when catching a glimpse of just that much danger.

What made the alarm bell in his brain ring out wasn't his logic but his own instinct.

The expression of Fugil at that time.

He was putting on a faint smile that wasn't filled with any emotion, but sheer killing intent was conveyed through it.

And that killing intent wasn't a hostility toward humans, but a presence that was like an act of snapping a twig.

Greifer's talent that excelled in passing through the point between life and death just barely and surviving enabled him to narrowly escape a deathly trap.

"As expected from someone who had received Sacred Eclipse's salvation. But, don't think that you will be able to keep getting away from death like that."

".....? Just what are you saying huh, you bastard. If you are going to sleep-talk then do it in a jail or in hell."

Fugil who was floating at some distance away suddenly spoke out.

Greifer responded to the conversation while being completely on guard in order to wait until the effect of the activated Reload on Fire ran out.

"I'm saying that you are able to use Drag-Rides like that because of the Elixir that Sacred Eclipse administered to you. Perhaps you don't remember

but, that's the truth."

".....!"

A forbidding look emerged on Aeryl's expression after hearing that.

She once heard the story from a drunk Greifer when she was falsifying her identity and appearance as Coral.

Greifer didn't have aptitude for Drag-Rides and he couldn't operate them, but he forced himself and continued to train until he almost died. At that time he encountered a mysterious girl and he became able to use Drag-Rides.

"Don't tell me, you are saying it was Sacred Eclipse's deed? For what....."

"——It's salvation."

Fugil instantly answered Aeryl's question.

His expression was gentle and peaceful.

The shadow of the abyss that enveloped the look in his eyes froze the backs of everyone present chillingly.

"She wished to save. The pitiful people who were abandoned by everyone, the pure people who were captured by a cruel fate. The people who staked everything on goodness with determination. The people who fought with the wish to save their important someone, the people who sought help. She prayed and wished, that she wanted to reach out her hand to them."

"....."

"Arshalia Rei Arcadia. She had mixed parentage from the Arcadia family and the Xfer—if she has to be described using cheap words, then she was a genius researcher. She who obtained the imperial throne saved me who was considered as the imperial family's enemy at that time, and made me her guard. In order to bring the insurrection inside the empire to a close and guide it to peace. And then, in order to bring about the true salvation to the world after that, she planned the use of Avalon. It was an event of the past that was more than a thousand years ago."

".....What are you saying I wonder? If you are buying time with an irrelevant story of the past, can you do it later?"

Rosa scoffed even while feeling bewildered.

She skated with Gorynych in order to launch an attack once more now that Bahamut's Divine Raiment had gone over the time limit.

But, Fugil didn't even twitch regardless of the approach from behind.

"You mean, that Arshalia. The person who became the model of Avalon's Automaton, and Sacred Eclipse....."

Fugil responded to Aeryl's statement with a derisive laughter.

At the same time, Gorynych's Cannon that entered the bombardment range spouted fire along with a thunderous roar.

——*DOoNN!*

An explosive sound that struck the eardrums.

The torrent of undulating energy closed in to Bahamut's back wings in a straight line.

Fugil held Chaos Brand on his back while still facing to the front and took a defensive stance.

Soffice who was instantly approaching right from beside Fugil quickly activated Vritra's Divine Raiment.

".....Mahapurana!"

The target wasn't Fugil himself, but the energy of the cannon that Gorynych fired.

Furthermore it wasn't to make it move to avoid the defending Chaos Brand, the beam of light had its trajectory manipulated to disperse like a shower.

The attack power of the attack decreased, but in exchange the dodging difficulty jumped up.

The plan was to first make Fugil unbalanced for the time being, and in that timing Aeryl, Mel, and Magialca would deal additional attacks—but,

"——Fuh"

Fugil smiled faintly. At that instant, his figure vanished.

Everyone lost sight of their attack target and put up their guard to the surroundings. At that time Magialca's angry yell came.

"Everyone fall back! I'll cover everyone's back!"

The seven huge arms of the Divine Drag-Ride Jormundgandr stretched out simultaneously and covered the back of Greifer and the others who were in the surroundings. The remaining two mechanical arms were placed behind Magialca herself and in front of her.

"Ouroboros's special armament, Zero One..... It's a power to vanish the target within its range and then freely manifest it back like before, but if my prediction is correct, that's not all there is to it."

Cold sweat was trickling from Magialca's forehead while she murmured.

It was the ability's strong point that it could also send Fugil himself to a space that they couldn't interfere with, but that in itself wasn't that much of a threat.

The problem was the aftermath of that.

"Don't tell me, even in that condition that guy himself can——!"

The instant Aeryl murmured that, Bahamut materialized in front of her while shining red.

At the same time Jormundgandr's armored arm and Zahhak that Aeryl wore reacted.

The special armament Breath Whip that was swung with a speed that was like a flash, and the giant fist that moved through the shortest route with the fastest speed.

But, both of them couldn't catch up with the accelerated Bahamut.

Fugil who rematerialized nearby using Zero One charged towards Aeryl with a slash.

(I won't make it.....! He got me!)

The moment Aeryl resolved herself like that in her heart, Greifer and Cuelebre forcefully cut in and became a shield.

After the attack was blocked by Photon Dive's invincibility, Fugil glided backwards and took distance.

He escaped from danger faster than the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins could counterattack.

Aeryl who was rescued from getting brought down in a flash breathed out in relief and Magialca also relaxed her expression.

"—Fuu. That was a violation of order but you did well, Greifer. It's amazing that you are able to predict how that guy would aim at Aeryl in this timing."

"You saved me there. Thank you Greifer."

Aeryl also continued like that after Magialca. Greifer responded with his usual sullen expression.

"What, it was just my instinct telling me, that if that guy might actually be able to still move even in the state when his figure vanished from this world, he might use that to erase the opening from Bahamut's Reload on Fire."

"——"

The weakened state from Reload on Fire's compression strengthening.

If Fugil used Ouroboros's Zero One to escape into a space where it was impossible to interfere with him during the first five seconds where he was defenseless, it would become a terrifying combination.

He would be able to accomplish strengthen his acceleration or destructive power by several times over without risk to trample the opponent one-sidedly.

"I thought he would surely come out at exactly five seconds later. The same just like that time with me. This is the payoff for before, yeah?"

The period of five seconds where the weakened state of the compression strengthening was in effect.

Just like how Fugil predicted the timing when the Photon Dive would run out before this, this time it was Greifer who predicted Fugil's thinking.

"And why did you think it would be me who get targeted first?"

".....Not really, it was only because you were nearby. Just a coincidence."

"You are the same like usual aren't you."

Aeryl smiled wryly while sending her gaze to the enemy in the front once more.

However, it would be troublesome from here on.

Although this time she was able to luckily escape danger because of Greifer's quick wit, there was no guarantee that the next time would also go well.

Perhaps there was no other way to defend against such attack other than activating invincibility like Greifer's Photon Dive ahead of time.

Everyone there comprehended the situation and strengthened their vigilance once more. It was then,

"I see. As expected you are really strong huh, hero-dono."

Magialca held Fugil in check with words along with a fearless grin.

"You complement the weak point Bahamut has with Ouroboros's special armament. I can understand why it's your favorite despite you being able to operate all Drag-Rides."

"....."

Fugil stayed silent in response.

He kept putting on an unchanging dignified smile while hovering still in the air.

"But, it doesn't look like your secret stops there. You are using two special armaments through that Sword Device on your waist. Even though Ouroboros's main body isn't here, is such feat possible?"

"That's, certainly it's as you say."

Soffice too seemed to have something in her mind as a Key's Supervisor. She said short words emotionlessly.

Next Aeryl also nodded in agreement.

"Certainly..... If he is able to use not only Bahamut that is created from Infinity, but even the other special armament freely then——"

A doubt was created thinking from the Drag-Ride's fundamental principle.

When the Drag-Ride wasn't materialized, its function couldn't be used fully.

"Buut, the main body of that Ouroboros something isn't anywhere. Is it really big or really small, or perhaps——"

"What if, we actually can see it already?"

".....-!"

Aeril's words interrupted Rosa's muttering. Everyone there gasped in surprise hearing that.

Right after that, Magialca let out a faint smile and spoke out her conclusion of the true identity of the out of place feeling they felt.

"It seems even I was being led around by the nose. We could see it already from some time ago. The transforming Drag-Ride Ouroboros that you have, is actually the true shape of Avalon."

"—What?"

Greifer raised his voice spontaneously hearing that statement, but Fugil's smile stayed unchanging.

But, Aeril who heard that felt convinced in her heart.

Even the mechanism of Infinity that enabled the user to use every kind of Divine Drag-Ride's Divine Raiment could be understood if Ouroboros was Avalon itself.

"And then, Ouroboros is most likely endowed with the functions of flying type, land battle type, and also special equipment type too, right? If that thing was made to record all the battles until now and manage that information, then even doing something like calculating the maximum continuation time of Greifer's Divine Raiment would be a piece of cake."

"In essence, the enemy is able to receive support from Avalon?"

Soffice added with an expressionless look, but the content of her sentence was something terrifying.

The shape of Ouroboros itself couldn't be seen until now, but a fragment of it had already appeared.

They had to directly fight the bottomless ability of Avalon.

"Let's just say, that you are half correct."

After a short pause, Fugil responded as though giving the opponent a reward.

"Avalon is half the body of the Zero Ruin, Ouroboros. The same like when using Over Limit, it's nothing more than a strengthening part. But, what can you do after knowing that?"

"That's really shameless of you to say that after hiding that fact until now. It seems you are the only one who fully controls that function and has acted completely as you pleased throughout history huh?"

Magialca declared with a confident smile as though she was convinced of something.

Then, Fugil who was floating still in the air silently relaxed his stance and lowered the tip of his Chaos Brand.

"Acting as I pleased is it? It's strange to be told that by you who, has subdued many others using money and authority."

"What's with that wording, are you jealous of me who rose up in the world using legitimate means?"

Fugil scoffed at Magialca who was making a mocking smile.

"You see, I don't want to kill you all, Seven Dragon Paladins."

"——"

The expressions of the Seven Dragon Paladins, including Aeryl showed slight nervousness and doubt.

That was an advice to surrender that was spoken out really naturally.

"To speak honestly, all of you are really something. You all are not merely talented, you have also struggled through the many trials that visited you throughout your life."

Greifer Nest was raised in the slums after his family's house fell into ruin.

He had no talent as a Drag-Knight, and yet, regardless of that he overturned that destiny with desperate effort and force of will.

Mel Gizalut suffered misfortune when her whole family was taken away by the Abyss when she was very young. Even so she stood up after that and climbed to the top as the youngest Drag-Knight.

Even Rosa, Soffice, and also Aeryl had opposed their cruel and hapless fate without giving up to persist in their own conviction.

"All of you have the qualifications. The qualifications to lead the many immature people as their model, as a legend. The qualifications to make a new choice in the world after this, or perhaps——"

Those words were indifferently formed from a gentle smile.

There was no light in the eyes of such Fugil.

"Or perhaps, as the vessel to be the next king. The existence that I'm longing for might appear. I'm holding hope for that. That's why don't struggle anymore. You don't really need the information of this Avalon. Make a new choice in the world where you have forgotten everything."

Fugil's seriousness could be glimpsed from his unhesitating tone.

He told them to withdraw without doing anything. That he wouldn't do anything bad to them if they did so. But,

".....Forgetting everything, huh. I don't know what you were doing but, I have heard about your true identity in general from Aeril. You are telling us to walk a life of dancing on the palm of your hand. Are you telling us to also ignore Sacred Eclipse without knowing what you are going to make it do? What do you all think, my compatriots!? Will you obey that guy!?"

Magialca deliberately made a loud voice and asked her comrades around her.

She didn't use Dragon Voice because she meant to start a fire under them, but answers that surpassed her imagination came back.

"—Don't speak out such jokes. My misfortune and also my happiness, they are all something that I obtained myself. Please don't make it as though all of that was your doing with that know-it-all face, hero-san."

The girl who was clad with the transformable Drag-Ride, Ddraig Gwiber, Mel Gizalut took the support from her comrades into consideration and prepared for the activation of her Dual Shift.

The Divine Raiment that could freely manipulate temperature could easily pull off refraction of air to make the enemy miscalculate distance, cause gust, inflicting damage or worsening a Drag-Ride's control using heat and low temperature, or even changing the terrain.

Her talent enabled her to choose the optimum strategy depending on the situation and launch a great variety of attacks.

She concentrated on looking for a chance to attack Fugil with the techniques that she had polished until now.

"I have had enough already of only doing as I am told by someone else. Although, I'll welcome it if it's an order from Lux-sama."

The red haired Rosa Granhide who was clad in the Divine Drag-Ride Gorynych approached from behind and awaited for an opening.

Her specialty was misdirection, using the ability of Tartaros Frame to rearrange her Drag-Ride and even transforming the shape to make counterfeits.

And then Rosa herself also specialized in fighting deceitfully to trick the enemy.

"Buut, I have no more intention to falsify my own true feelings."

The path of running away in order to avert her eyes from weakness had been severed.

In order to repay the debt to Lux who saved her, she had no hesitation or fear.

"I too—won't recognize it. Entrusting something to someone means trusting that person. Lux gave his trust to me. He reached out his hand to me even though it hurt him. Not like you."

The brown skinned Key's Supervisor Soffice muttered so. And then, beside her Aeryl also tightly gripped her special armament Breath Whip.

"I am a Lord. I'll seek about how this world should be in a manner that I thought up myself."

Aeryl who lost her sisters yelled while wearing Zahhak.

Beside her Greifer also made his usual sullen expression.

"I don't have any great causes like this bunch. But there is just one thing that I get. Don't look down on humans too much okay, hero-sama?"

Everyone thrust away the words of gentle persuasion and took fighting stances.

Right after that, Magialca snapped her fingers with a fearless smile.

"That's how it is. —You're prepared aren't you, hero-dono!"

Those words acted as the trigger and the world's strongest Drag-Knights moved simultaneously.

The battle in order to stop Sacred Eclipse and save the world from destruction.

Their full strength that was filled with their pride and determination was liberated through the Drag-Rides and the curtain of battle was opened.

The man who was standing in front of Avalon's control room—in front of the light that was rising up from the central flapped the wings of the jet black Drag-Ride he wore, and swung up the tip of his great sword.

"Everyone—I want you to lend me your ears for a bit while fighting."

Aeril nervously conveyed her words that were amplified by Dragon Voice to everyone.

"I will tell you what I know, about the true function that is hidden in Avalon."

Episode 1 – The Beginning of Peace

Part 1

"—Nii-san. Please wake up. I'm coming in."

"Uu, nn....."

There was a light knocking sound and the familiar soft voice of his little sister.

After Lux made an ambiguous reply, the door was opened and a presence approached him.

"Good grief, how long are you planning to sleep just because you don't have to do any chores for a while? Today is the day of the periodic medical examination, so please prepare yourself properly."

"N, nn....."

Airi opened the curtain and the window. The sunlight shined through and the tranquil morning air flowed into the room.

He was in a room that was made from smooth wood.

The interior design gave out a high class atmosphere.

This place was the Royal Officer Academy of Cross Field in the New Kingdom.

Lux was sleeping in his nostalgic room at the girl's dormitory.

Lux cleared up his hazy consciousness and lifted up his languid body on the bed.

"Airi.....? What day is today again?"

"It's January tenth. Please wash your face quickly. The breakfast in the dining hall will be over soon."

"I see, you're right."

Lux kept sitting on the bed and took a deep breath.

Although he still wasn't in his best condition, there wasn't any major discomfort or after-effects in his body.

It was a good luck that could be called a miracle that his condition was this good after struggling through such fierce battles.

"Are you alright, Nii-san? Should I feed you instead?"

Lux ignored Airi's teasing with a wry smile and then the siblings headed to the dining hall together.

The breakfast that was made by the capable cook of the Academy was delicious like usual.

—

The battle that happened in the abandoned capital Guernica in the Marcafal Kingdom—the final decisive battle that decided the fate of the world.

Two weeks had passed since then.

The representatives of the countries, the Seven Dragon Paladins, Syvalles of the New Kingdom, and then the Drag-Knights of the world alliance.

All of them made frantic efforts in order to obstruct Listelka and the others, the Lords, from ruling over the world after their betrayal, and to prevent the humanoid Ragnarok Sacred Eclipse from destroying the world.

Many of the elite Drag-Knights from each country became sacrifices, but the only silver lining was that not a single one of the girls was lost in that

battle.

And then, Singlen's ambition to secretly monopolize Avalon was also crushed, and they were able to obtain Avalon.

That victory was the greatest good news.

After Lux lost consciousness, the Seven Dragon Paladins including Magialca reached the control room and Aeryl connected with the central.

She safely completed the third trial that was given by the Automata Arshalia and grasped the hidden function of Avalon.

First Aeryl suspended the resurrection of the humanoid Ragnarok Sacred Eclipse. She ran out of strength doing that and so they temporarily withdrew.

For the countries who lost many Drag-Knights in this great war, they had no reason to leave the legacy and technology of the ancient era alone, but everything would come to nothing if they excessively forced Aeryl who could control Avalon and broke her down.

The surveillance of Aeryl who became the manager of Avalon was carried out in turns by the countries. For the time being her safety was guaranteed, and then——

It was the New Kingdom who was first in turn in being entrusted with her.

—

"Thank you for the meal. Then, Airi. I'll go visit the Triad too after this."

"Yes. Please do that, Nii-san."

By the way, the reason Airi was accompanying him was in order to avoid a situation where Lux was surrounded by the female students now that he was showing his face in the Academy after so long.

The existence of Sacred Eclipse and the danger of world destruction itself were also informed to the Academy due to Listelka's incitement, but all the students were also told that Lux and the others headed to the Marcafal Kingdom in order to stop that, and that they had splendidly accomplished it.

The students had a lot of things they wanted to ask Lux who they couldn't meet until now because he was in recuperation. Surely he wouldn't be able to avoid getting showered with questions.

Originally the Academy's famous group, the Triad, should be the ones with the role to stop that, but the three were also in recuperation because of serious injuries and fatigue.

The pod for medical treatment in the Academy seemed to have finally run out of energy. It became completely impossible to use after performing the minimum treatment to each of the three.

Furthermore the main force of Syvalles other than Yoruka—Lisha and the others were returning to their respective homes.

Around half of their injuries like broken bones and the like had been recovered, but they were given rest to take away their fatigue too.

After parting from Airi at the stairs of the girl's dormitory, Lux took a light rest after meal in his room before heading to the classroom in the school building.

The first class after New Years for Lux who had been staying in bed all this time until now began.

"Come to think of it, it has also been a long time since I met with everyone in the class."

Even though it felt uncomfortable when he first came here because he was the only boy, right now he felt happy from his heart that he could talk with the girls in his class.

"Long time no see, Lux-kun! I heard you saved the world? Thank you!"

"Sheesh..... I wanted to make various chore requests while you weren't here you know? Teach me when your body recovered okay? I'm making the reservation."

"Wait, stealing a march just because Tillfur is absent is unacceptable. Even us too——"

As expected, the girl classmates surrounded him before the homeroom began, but they soon scattered after Instructor Raigree who arrived yelled at them.

"Don't cut loose this early after New Years. I'll give extra homework to anyone who isn't in their seat right now."

The beautiful young instructor.

Raigree's dignified look and atmosphere were also something nostalgic for Lux.

She sent a brief glance at Lux to observe his condition. After confirming it, she resumed her talk.

"At the battle this time, countries all over the world—including the New Kingdom, lost many Drag-Knights. Although the threat from the Ruins is gone for the time being, all of you have to become fully qualified as an officer as quickly as possible, and become the foundation that will support the new kingdom in the future."

Raigree's tone was serious.

Of course, the cultivation of military officers were also carried out in various places other than in this Academy, but the total number was just too few compared to the amount of personnel that was sought.

The Four Great Nobles who lent their soldiers for the expedition to the Marcafal Kingdom also lost considerable number of soldiers, but it was also an alarming problem for the royal capital.

If the New Kingdom was attacked by the Abyss or bandits like Dragon Marauder in this situation, they would be helpless.

"This Academy too is still in the middle of developing. The future of the New Kingdom rests on your shoulders. If you all got it then I'll introduce an admitted student before the class begins."

"Eh.....?"

The expressions of everyone in the class tensed before the atmosphere changed into bewilderment.

Who would enroll here at this timing?

While everyone was most likely thinking so, a single girl entered the classroom.

"Nice to meet you. I am an imperial princess of the Lords, Aeryl Vi Arcadia. I will only stay here for a month, but please treat me well."

The one who entered the classroom and bowed in front of the blackboard was a lovely girl with an androgynous look.

The silver hair that was just like Lux was braided and trailed down until her waist. Her asymmetrically colored eyes produced mysticity that seemed to transcend humanity.

She had showed up in the Academy several times under the guise of Coral, the aide of Vanheim Principality's Seven Dragon Paladin, but this was her first time coming here as a Lord.

(No, more importantly Aeryl is enrolling here!? And she is wearing a skirt!)

She was a full-fledged girl by nature, so there wasn't anything wrong with that, but it was a bit of a shock for Lux.

"Err, she is Aeryl-san who is a Lord, that means she is that person who we heard about?"

"Yeah. The person they said became our ally—more importantly, she resembles Lux-kun so much. Like her hair color....."

"Somehow, it also feels like she resembles Coral-kun but.....she is so cool. No. She is pretty."

Amidst those mutterings, the girl called Aeryl winked as though she was enjoying Lux's discomposure.

"That's how it is, that's why, once again my best regards, Lux-kun."

Aeryl walked as though she was cutting through the commotion that was created inside the class and sat down near Lux.

The students started to become noisy once more at the arrival of the unfamiliar beauty who was a Lord, but they were quietened by a glare from Raigree and the class began.

Of course, the Academy had been informed that Aeryl had been cooperative with the alliance army, even so, she was someone who the students had an abundance of topics to talk about.

After that it went without saying that each time there was a short break between classes, the classmates would form a crowd and showered her along with Lux with questions.

Part 2

—At the rooftop of the school building, during the lunch break.

Lux along with Aeryl made an excuse that there was a summon for the Academy's raid squad Syvalles and escaped to there from the female students.

"Just what is going on? Enrolling into the Academy with that appearance——"

"Queen Raffi and Headmaster Relie listened to my wish. It would be harder to protect me instead when I'm getting targeted if I'm at a place like the capital."

Although she was in the middle of recuperation, Aeryl was still a key figure who was able to control Avalon right now.

It was unknown when hostile forces who wanted her ability would target her.

It seemed that it was decided that it was safer to place her in the Academy where the users of Divine Drag-Rides gathered rather than the area of the Royal Capital where a lot of its Drag-Knights were lost during the great war.

There was also a talk of entrusting her to the Four Great Nobles' Dist Ralgris, but if there was his daughter Celistia, as expected he would support Aeryl's enrollment into the Academy.

"But it's unexpected. Contrary to my expectations, everyone accepted Aeryl naturally——"

It seemed there was an explanation to the masses that Aeryl was an ally in regards to the matter of the Lords, but Lux thought that others would poke a bit more in regards to how she was using perception manipulation to disguise herself as an existence called Coral.

"About that, you know, it's just as Lux-kun realized."

She smiled mischievously.

One of her eyes that was colored like a jade was the proof of the Baptism she received.

She possessed the power to manipulate perception using the Ruin's functions.

Using that, regardless of the lack of notification regarding the relation of Aeryl and Coral, the students of the Academy were accepting that fact.

"But, I'm using perception manipulation only for that. I have no intention of doing anything further than that. I have to make an effort to live as Aeryl, besides—I'm already sick and tired of pretending to be various things that I am not."

"I see."

Lux nodded in response to her expression that looked unbound. And then Aeryl twirled on the spot.

The fringe of her short skirt was blown by the wind on the rooftop and it fluttered riskily. Lux's gaze darted around from it.

The white thighs that peeked out from below the skirt that was held down with both hands looked bewitching. Her face that was faintly reddening looked adorable.

".....Did you see?"

"E, err.....just for a bit."

The lacey panty with refreshing light blue color suited the androgynous Aeryl. Though, as expected Lux couldn't declare so.

She slightly puffed out her cheeks that was blushing with embarrassment, and then she suggestively spoke out "Well, I guess it's fine if it's Lux-kun".

"Looks like I'm still not used to being a[girl] in the end. It feels windy at my lower body, and the girls in the class also told me that I still have a cool atmosphere——"

"That..... you look cute like that."

".....-!"

When Lux unconsciously said that, Aeryl's eyes opened wide and her body staggered.

Her face reddened even more than when her panty was seen. She averted her gaze awkwardly.

"That girl uniform, matches you really well. Congratulations on your enrollment."

Lux could say that naturally because it wasn't flattery but something that came from his heart.

No, with the end of the battle this time, a change also happened within Lux himself.

His feelings towards the girls became even stronger than before.

It wasn't just a deep affection simply as a friend, but he was starting to harbor feelings towards them as members of the opposite sex.

"Thank you..... Aah geez, this is really regrettable."

Aeril replied while acting bashful, but then she turned around with a troubled look.

"Regrettable?"

When Lux tilted his head in response, a small sigh was returned to him.

"There is still a bit more until the [pact] ends. If that's not the case, I'll be able to say it clearly at once, and yet——"

"Eh.....?"

Lux felt his heart jump inside his chest seeing Aeril's pained expression from the side.

But, the girl didn't answer back and she looked up to the perfectly clear blue sky before speaking to him.

"I guess it's about time soon. Let's go eat lunch."

She directed to him a friendly smile as a friend just like when she was acting as Coral.

Lux left the rooftop with Aeril even while feeling bewildered at the strange emotion in his heart.

Part 3

When the school was over, he temporarily parted from Aeril in front of the girl's dormitory.

He wanted to be together with her a bit more, but Lux had his own business to do.

His chore jobs had also piled up like a mountain, but there was a place that he had to head towards no matter what before that.

First he headed to a florist inside Cross Field. After that he purchased fresh fruits in the market.

In the end he returned to the Academy—and he went to visit a room in the girl's dormitory. It was Airi's room.

"This is Lux, can I come in?"

"Yes. Please. Feel free to enter."

Lux felt relieved inside his heart hearing that indifferent tone without any inflection.

In this room there was the roommate and best friend of his little sister(Airi), Noct.

In the deadly battle two weeks ago, even the Triad participated in the final decisive battle and he heard how they got seriously injured.

Fortunately their injuries seemed to be something they could recover from, even so, they were the people who he wanted to meet first where he also wanted to say his thanks to them for risking themselves in order to protect Airi.

"Then, excuse me—wait, uwah"

As soon as he opened the door, he saw the figure of three girls and got bewildered.

He completely thought that there was only Noct inside, but contrary to his expectations, all the Triad were there.

"Long time no see, Lux-san. It's great that you are healthy. Fua....."

He discovered Noct looking unusually sleepy. Perhaps she had been sleeping until just now even though it was evening already.

She was wearing a light green pajama, while one of her hands was hugging a pillow that looked like a cushion.

Somehow, her appearance looked somewhat fancy.

"Forgive me for my unsightly appearance. I was only finally allowed to move from the medical room to here."

It seemed Noct who came from a family of servants was embarrassed with her appearance from just waking up.

It was cute how her cheeks were slightly red while her face stayed expressionless.

"You don't need to feel bothered about that. Noct looking slovenly like this makes me feel like I'm able to look at something precious."

"Lux-chi, your wording sounds indecent somehow. Didja suddenly get awakened to the younger girl faction?"





On the other side, Tillfur, who was lightly dressed with clothing that had a black color base was speaking out to him from the chair beside the bed.

Different from Noct whose broken bone was healed to a degree by the hibernation pod, there was a splint remaining on Tillfur's one hand.

But, her consciousness was clear. It seemed there was a difference in fatigue and damage between each of them.

Lux smiled wryly at Tillfur's teasing while noticing that his feelings towards them had actually grown.

It was also like that towards Aeryl before this, but perhaps after the battles had reached an end, somewhere in his heart there was a part that lightened with comfort.

"Oh dear, to think Tillfur can speak like that in spite of you being the one who hurriedly dressed up after hearing that Lux-kun will visit here. Even though you were still sleeping with bedraggled hair only in your underwear just now."

"Aaah, Sharis! Even though I told you not to say that in front of Lux-chi! Geez, I won't lend you a hand anymore no matter how troubled you are!"

Tillfur's face reddened while she acted flustered and got angry at Sharis who was coming down from the upper bed.

The eldest and the leader of the Triad had her right arm bandaged with a splint and suspended down from her neck. Even so she welcomed him with her usual friendly smile.

"Sharis-san too, long time no see. That, the state of your injury——"

It seemed the state of her broken bone was the worst among the three. It seemed that without the treatment of the hibernation pod, her arm wouldn't be able to completely go back to normal.

But, the girl with the elder sister disposition didn't show even a hint of that hardship on the surface and smiled teasingly.

"Yeah, it will be fine now. It will take a bit more time until it heals completely, but it looks like there won't be any after-effects remaining. It can only be called as good luck now that I think back to the battles we were struggling through."

"Is that so, I'm glad."

Lux felt relieved from his heart and his expression also relaxed.

"But, please don't act too recklessly. Although it couldn't be helped because the strategy demanded it, but if you are injured because of me or Airi——"

Lux didn't know about the strategy where Airi and the Triad participated in the mission at Avalon's deep level floor.

Of course it was natural because he wasn't told anything about it, but he thought his heart would stop when he heard about it in the middle.

"Yes. Though it doesn't sound persuasive at all when the one saying it is Lux-san who almost dies every time."

Noct muttered that with an unblinking stare. Tillfur too approached and touched his body mischievously.

"Yeep yeep. Lux-chi yourself, are you alright? How about I give you a massage?"

"Hmm. Having a junior worrying about me isn't a bad feeling. Then, I wonder if I can ask you to help me when changing clothes or taking a bath until my arm recovers?"

"Yes. If it's something that I can do then——wait, eeheh!?"

When Sharis entwined her arm with Lux's arm and brought her cheek closer to his face, the sensation of her moderately big breast was conveyed to him.

At the same time the scent of her favorite rose perfume tickled his nose and made his head go into a daze.

A few seconds later, he barely shook himself free from the temptation that made him want to keep receiving it forever. Lux shook and untangled her arm while his face was turning red.

"Oho, it doesn't look like you are completely opposed to it. From your reaction, we too aren't someone you can disregard as woman huh."

"Wai-! Please don't make fun of me. Even I, more or less is, that's——"

"We get it. We also understand how reliable of a boy you are. And also how you challenged that Sir Singlen to battle and took revenge for us."

"....."

He didn't expect that he would get thanked instead even though he was the one who came here to visit them, who were injured when protecting Airi.

No, surely she was saying that so that Lux wouldn't be even more concerned than this about their injuries.

Lux's chest grew hot once more, knowing the feeling of Sharis and the others who associated with him as fellow students and as friends.

He felt really glad, that he could protect everyone.

"By the way, just now was a personal gratitude from me. If you feel that it's still not enough, should I make Tillfur and Noct do it too?"

"I, it's enough already. Then, let's meet again in Syvalles when everyone is in good health. I'll also come to visit again."

"Lux-chi. You aren't forgetting that the requests are also piling up like a mountain, aren'tcha?"

"Ahaha, please go easy on me....."

He had distanced himself from the Academy's chores for a while, but he wondered how many had piled up right now.

It was scary to ask, so he dodged the matter with a wry smile and exited the room.

A few minutes later after that, the three people inside the room conversed with a small voice.

—

"Fuu..... My heart was throbbing so hard, really unlike me. Though it seemed he himself also noticed, that the wall in his heart towards us has vanished."

After the danger of world destruction by Sacred Eclipse had settled down, Lux's intimacy towards the girls were growing.

That was to say, that the moment to answer their feelings was approaching near.

"Yes. But from that reaction, it looks like Lux-san hasn't picked anyone inside his heart."

Noct expressed her impression with her usual bland tone.

"This is just really complicated. Haah, the girls around him are just too formidable ain't it....."

On the other hand Tillfur let out a dissatisfied sigh and laid down face up on the bed.

The Triad's feelings towards Lux.

They too couldn't deny that it was in the process of leaving the territory of simply being friends.

That was exactly why they along with Airi took on the role of managing and monitoring the girls' [pact].

"Oh dear, I can tell it's going to be hard going forward with our state like this. After all, our job will reach the finale a few days from now."

Noct also nodded at that statement from Sharis.

"Yes. Let us prepare for that time, towards the parade of the New Kingdom and the end of the [pact]."

The time that should come was approaching.

The time that they understood all this time would arrive in the near future.

The three keenly felt that arrival and nodded at each other.

Part 4

After Lux finished visiting the Triad, he finished some light chores from the Academy.

Although, the contents of the jobs were relatively light, and if he was pushed to say, he noticed that he was given the work as an excuse to evade the pursuit from the female students.

And then—at night.

After having dinner in the dining hall, the bathing time arrived.

Lux entered the large public bath after the girls finished bathing. The large space was reserved for him alone. His heart danced with the feeling of liberation after so long.

Naturally there wasn't any proper bathing facility in the fortress in the Marcafal Kingdom. There the most he could do was draw hot water to wipe his body with using a towel.

"Haa..... Somehow, it feels a bit floaty....."

Lux talked to himself like that inside the bathtub that was filled to the brim with milky white hot water.

It wasn't about the atmosphere of the Academy that was liberated from nervousness, but about Lux himself.

Thinking back, he had continued to keep running determinately since the day he decided to overthrow the Old Empire.

The planning of the Revolution, the chore jobs he did while chasing after Fugil, the training using the tournaments, the enrollment into the Academy.

In order to change the country as a prince of Arcadia.

After that he continued to fight in order to accomplish the mission that he carried.

Strictly speaking there was still various tasks remaining for him, like his professional duties as Lisha's knight, attending the distribution of Avalon's legacy and technology as a Seven Dragon Paladin, and so on, but there was no doubt that he had reached a juncture where he could stop.

"What should I do from here on.....?"

In a few more days, it had been decided that the New Years parade that had been delayed until now due to the various circumstances of the great war would be held for three days. Soon he would depart to the royal capital along with the female students of the Academy.

Lux had also heard that on the last day of the parade, he would be honorably awarded with commendations for his heavy contributions as a member of the world alliance, as a member of Syvalles, and as the exclusive knight of Lisha.

He was feeling complicated that he would receive commendations with his status as a criminal, but on the other hand, it was also a situation that he should welcome when thinking about Airi who was in the same position as him.

Even after that he would make contributions to the New Kingdom as Lisha's knight, and then.

He would heal Philuffy's body, raise achievements in order to have Airi's criminal collar removed, protect Aeril.

"After that—I'm"

He felt like there were still other things remaining that he should do.

But for some reason he couldn't recall it. His thought was turning dim and vanishing just by trying to think about it.

".....I want, to meet everyone."

Not just the Triad and Airi, he wanted to meet Lisha and the others who fought together with him.

He felt like he would be able to recall what he should accomplish by being together with them.

Lux listened to the echo of his muttering inside the bathroom while experiencing the sense of freedom and a tinge of loneliness.

Part 5

Around the time Lux was submerging himself in deep emotion in the New Kingdom, the war of the girls was starting behind the scenes.

It was different from a war that made use of Drag-Rides, but it was beyond a doubt a war.

It was a battle that gambled their destiny, which was even more severe than the battle at Avalon in a sense.

A strategy meeting for that was being carried out even in a border region of the Ymir Theocracy.

On a highway near the national border.

Three girls and a woman who were staying in an inn there were conversing noisily until late at night.

"So the preparations for the dress I'll be wearing at the capital's parade is also perfect. I never thought that the house of Einvolk would prepare it for me though."

Krulcifer who was trying on a deep blue dress was chuckling beside the fireplace.

The parental heart of her step father, Stiyl Einvolk was terribly amusing somehow.

Krulcifer who temporarily returned back to her country for recuperation and information exchange spent two weeks at her home in the Ymir Theocracy.

It was lonely to be separated for that long from Lux, but it was also just right because in any case it was necessary to heal her injury.

Her body that was weakened and her injuries from the battle the other day like abrasions and bruises luckily recovered completely without leaving behind any marks.

It was a situation that she had no complaint about for her reunion with Lux at the parade in the Royal Capital.

"What do you all think from your point of view? Do I have any prospect of victory if it is with my current self?"

"Yes, yes, you are really perfect, my lady. —Other than the breasts."

It was a room for four people with luxurious design.

A petite girl let out a mutter that was mixed with a sigh on one of the four beds.

The Seven Dragon Paladin of the Ymir Theocracy, Mel Gizalut was wearing a simple but lovely camisole. She was sending an exasperated gaze at Krulcifer.

The decisive battle of the girls that fought over Lux.

Mel was taking a slightly fed up attitude at the enthusiasm that Krulcifer directed towards it.

"Is that so, I don't want to be told anything about breasts from you but, thank you. And what about you Soffice, what do you think?"

Next, Krulcifer moved her gaze towards the girl who was doing a puzzle on another bed, the brown skinned Soffice Xfer.

The three took rest and acted together for around two weeks based on their common point as fellow citizens of the Ymir Theocracy and as fellow Key's Supervisors.

Soffice who was addressed didn't respond for a while, before she finally muttered expressionlessly with a small voice.

".....This country, is too cold. I want to go to the capital quickly."

"No one is asking you that. Or rather, naturally you will feel like that if you are dressed like that in this country."

Krulcifer let out a sigh and retorted.

Soffice, whose appearance was usually nearly half-naked, was despondent as expected towards the coldness of the Ymir Theocracy in January.

"In the end I also cannot meet Ney Louches, I've got quite a lot of free time."

They also casually went to check on the Ruin Hall's situation, but for some reason they couldn't meet the familiar Automata there.

Soffice who was unable to meet with the Automata of the Moon who was like her little sister, Re Plica, was spending her time during her recuperation mostly alone.

Her body was only covered very little around her chest and waist with underwear. She took position on the bed that was nearest to the fireplace and wouldn't move at all from there.

After looking at Krulcifer's appearance once more, she folded her arms and made a thinking posture before declaring.

"Even though Lux looks like that, he is an owner of a radical fetish, so the current Krulcifer won't be able to win, perhaps."

".....Getting chained in a prison and then peeing was your own circumstance right.....? Can you please not describe Lux-kun as an owner of a peculiar fetish as you please?"

"-.....!? How do you know that information!? Did Lux expose it to you!? I'll beat him up when we go to the capital!"

Soffice cheeks reddened from shame even while her expression was staying blank, and she was clenching her fist tightly.

Mel was staring at that with an astonished gaze before turning back towards Krulcifer.

"Putting aside this peeing paladin, in reality you won't know your chance just from your appearance. You have approached Onii-chan before not just once or twice right?"

"I didn't wet my pants! It was only because Lux didn't let me go to toilet even when I requested him!"

"You're right. I'm not feeling inferior towards the other girls but, I also don't have an actual feeling that I have a great lead from them. Of course, I have self-confidence, but I cannot say that I'm ahead with certainty."

Krulcifer consented to Mel's comment while ignoring Soffice's protest.

"It's troubling that it's not a certain thing. After all, all the relatives of the house of Einvolk have been told that Ojou-sama will marry with Lux-sama."

The one who opened the door and entered while saying that was the butler Alterize.

This time she was acting as a bodyguard for Krulcifer and the others. She was even in charge of giving them various support, including arranging for their lodging at the capital's parade.

Honestly speaking, the house of Einvolk also burdened her with the role to marry Lux with Krulcifer for sure this time.

"Lux-sama, too, has reached a juncture where he can pause with his job after that battle right? In that case I thought that perhaps the way he looks at Ojou-sama will also change when the two of you reunite again."

"If my rivals were on normal levels, I too won't feel uneasy like this though."

For Krulcifer, she didn't feel like she would lose with her looks, pedigree, and the relationship that she had built with Lux, but the girls who were her rivals were really formidable.

Putting aside Yoruka who was already brimming with the intention to settle as a concubine, there was Lux's childhood friend Philuffy who possessed childish looks and a voluptuous body that would tickle a male's instincts. Above all else she had the advantage of the bond from her past with Lux.

The captain of Syvalles, Celistia, had a noble and dignified appearance, but in contrast to that she had an innocent side where it was easy for other people to misunderstand her and she was unable to relate well with them. That gap could easily shoot down the heart of Lux who liked to be helpful.

Until now her approach towards Lux didn't have any momentum because of her being a late bloomer, but recently she was directing a strong fondness towards Lux where he too responded to it quite favorably.

Her position as the eldest daughter of one of the Four Great Nobles and as fellow citizens of the New Kingdom also made it easier to give a push to such a relationship.

As for the Lord, Aeril, speaking frankly she was an irregular existence. It was as though she couldn't be predicted.

She and Lux were both fellow Arcadians. With her position as the manager of Avalon, they would act together from here on too, which was a troublesome point. She couldn't be underestimated with how skillfully she was leading Lux around.

If she didn't take Aeril seriously because she was a newcomer who came late, Lux would surely get taken away.

And then, the last was the princess of the New Kingdom, Lizsharte. The existence who Krulcifer was on guard the most against. The girl who might be the one with the slimmest chance to be joined in marriage with Lux in reality.

She was also the one who dragged Lux into the Academy, and the one with the influential position as the princess of the New Kingdom with deep ties to the Old Empire.

The problem was that Lisha herself was completely mistaking how to use that authority and how she was expressing her fondness towards Lux, but if

it was only in the point regarding the worth in giving support to someone, Krulcifer thought that Lisha's charm in that aspect surpassed the rest by far.

She thought that also because of how everyone in the Academy was harboring affection for her despite her status as the New Kingdom's princess which was hard to approach.

Krulcifer also wasn't an exception to that.

If she had to mention who was the girl who she could be the most frank and open with at the Academy, the answer would be Lisha. She had been helped by her and also helped her back many times.

She deliberately didn't speak it out but, she recognized her strength and effort, and she was also harboring good will towards her as a friend.

(But, exactly because of that——)

She couldn't lose.

Several more days. From the first day of the parade in the capital where everyone would gather, the [pact] would reach the end and it would become possible to confess to Lux.

It would be important to take the initiative, but the process to reach until that phase was also equally important.

After all the possibility that she feared the most, was that Lux would be harboring equal fondness to everyone.

"It doesn't matter what you are going to do but just win okay. Otherwise I'll take Onii-chan for myself."

Krulcifer returned to herself after hearing Mel's suggestive teasing.

"Sorry, but it won't become like that."

Even though she was thinking various things, she was convinced with that single sentence.

She had not the slightest intention of giving up. She swore she would make Lux hers without fail.

In order to do that she would simply do everything she could. She steeled her determination once more and formed her strategy.

—

—On the other hand, around the same time.

Each of the other girls' feelings were also similarly growing stronger with the approaching time to confess to Lux.

Celis was resting while also training in the territory of her family. Philuffy was together with Relie in the mansion of the Aingram family. Yoruka was quietly acting as Lux's guard. Each of them were making their own preparations.

And then, the day before the parade finally arrived.

The New Years party that was slightly delayed than the previous years.

Lux boarded a coach that was bound for the capital in order to participate in the festival that was held within the peace they had won.

Episode 2 – Romance War

Part 1

"How nostalgic. This atmosphere too, the last time it felt like this was during the National Foundation Day I think?"

The horse carriage had passed through the impressive castle gate. Lux got out from the carriage and stepped inside the castle town.

Airi beside him made a faint smile at the nostalgic air that they felt after a long time.

The Royal Capital of the New Kingdom, Lordgalia.

The castle town that was crammed with old fashioned but gorgeous buildings was bustling with colorful decorations. The main street was overflowing with vitality before the parade.

"The Abyss won't come anymore right? The peace has come right? Yahoo!"

"Festival, what foods are there out there?"

They passed a pair of young siblings on their way to the inn. Lux's gaze turned towards the big brother and little sister who were talking energetically.

Because of the information manipulation that Listelka carried out by scattering the Abyss called Shadow everywhere, the masses' nerves had also been worn down.

That anxiety had also vanished after they safely stopped the activity of Sacred Eclipse.

Lux stared at the childish siblings smilingly while feeling relieved inside his heart.

It would be great if after this the people's evaluation towards Queen Raffi was safely recover with this parade.

(I'm worried for her majesty.)

When he met her the other day in the fortress of the Marcafal Kingdom, she showed a fainthearted appearance due to her accumulating anxiety.

The throne of the King was also targeted by the senior consuls and she was losing confidence in uniting the New Kingdom, but that would be a troubling development for Lux too.

The despotic administration that went on for a long time where the tendency of male chauvinism was excessively strong.

The great man Count Atismata opposed the long history of the Old Empire head-on.

It was exactly because his little sister Queen Raffi succeeded him for the throne of the New Kingdom that the country was able to correct the antiquated bias.

And then, she also saved Lux and Airi who were in a situation where it wouldn't be strange for them to get executed.

In order to repay that debt and also to become Lisha's strength, there were still things remaining that he should do.

(I'm really stupid, thinking conveniently, that I might lose sight of my objective after the world was saved from danger.)

The moment Lux made a self-depreciating smile, Airi quietly pulled at the sleeve of Lux's uniform.

"Nii-san. Please don't act absentminded. You will get crashed into from behind like that."

"Ah, sorry. I'll be careful——"

When Lux was moving to avoid the tall horse carriages that were coming and going through the road, a large cargo slipped off and fell.

One wooden log was slipping off nearby Airi.

".....-!?"

"——Watch out-!"

Lux reflexively stood in the way to protect Airi. The students around them held their breath.

But, the slipping off log didn't hit Lux or Airi but stopped still in that place.

"Eh.....?"

"Are you alright, Lu-chan?"

A dreamy voice that followed one's own pace.

The reverberation that felt somewhat nostalgic and also pleasant made Lux spontaneously open his closed eyes.

Over there was the figure of a girl that was lightly supporting a single log with one hand to protect Lux and Airi.

The pink haired girl wearing the Academy's uniform and a sword belt was Lux's childhood friend, Philuffy Aingram.

"Phi-chan!?"

"Heave, ho"

The horse cart's coach got down in great panic about what happened, but Philuffy threw the log with one hand and returned it to its original position.

After that the headmaster Relie Aingram also came and together the two of them joined the line that was heading to the inn.

"You saved me there, thank you."

"I'm Lu-chan's bodyguard, after all."

Lux's cheeks unconsciously relaxed seeing the faint smile on her face.

She was a girl with a gentle and docile appearance, but she had been trained in martial arts by Magialca and possessed the power of an Abyss. It seemed that she was in good health.

At the battle the other day, she intentionally made the Ragnarok factor in her body rampage. Lux was worried whether it would have a bad influence on her body, but it seemed that for the time being she was alright to the degree that she could come to the parade.

Although, now that they had obtained Avalon, he wished that he would be able to make her receive treatment for the Abyss part in her body as soon as possible at the next chance but—

"My my, this is a bit of a failure. Even though I planned to make Lux-kun reunite with Phi at the party venue. But, this way is also not bad."

"Headmaster..... Please stop ignoring your original objective and talk about the capture method for Nii-san."

"I have prepared a dress exclusive for Phi for the sake of this day you know? I was holding hope that Lux-kun would lose his self-control when he is reunited with my little sister at the banquet but—"

Airi was muttering with an exasperated face, but Relie who had entered a state of wild delusion wouldn't stop.

(Relie-san too is just like always huh.....)

Lux smiled wryly, however he felt happy that he was able to reunite with Philuffy who was in good health.

It seemed he would be able to join up with several members of Syvalles even before the party.

When they entered the inn they were reserving together with the bewildered students, there was another encounter with an unexpected person.

"My bad to intrude while you are still tired from the journey, but I wonder if you can lend me a bit of your time, princess's knight-dono."

A great feudal lord of the New Kingdom—a person of the house of Ralgris that was one of the Four Great Nobles.

The one who was there wasn't Celis who he was familiar with, but her father.

A man in the prime of his life with finely chiseled features, Dist Ralgris.

Lux had seen his face several times since his childhood, but he had no experience of talking personally with him.

He followed him nervously where he was guided into a nearby underground bar that didn't have any sign of other customers.

Several men who seemed to be guards also came along, but even they were waiting outside the bar. The two of them were completely alone.

Philuffy who claimed to be Lux's bodyguard also tried to come along, but as expected, he read the mood and asked her to stay in the inn.

There was no doubt that Dist was waiting for him in the inn because he had something important to talk about with him.

"Pardon me. I'm interrupting your break time and brought you to this kind of gloomy place."

"Please don't mind it. More importantly——"

Lux glanced towards the wooden counter that was giving off a dark brown luster.

Perhaps this place was completely reserved for the two of them, because he couldn't even find the figure of the bar owner at the counter.

Dist prepared a glass of water instead of alcohol and put it in front of Lux.

"This is the first time I can have a talk like this with you. Thank you for taking care of my daughter all this time."

"It's an honor to be told so, Lord Dist. But it's me who has been greatly indebted to Celis-senpai all this time."

"No need to act humble like that, hero-dono."

Even though Lux was told that, Dist's rigid aura and tone made him nervous.

After exchanging a light greeting, they soon broached the main topic.

"What happened just now was dangerous wasn't it? It looked like a simple accident but, thinking of the worst case, please be careful while you are in the capital. Right now you are already the center of discussion everywhere."

".....? What do you mean by that?"

Dist drank some wine that was mixed with water.

When Lux tilted his head, Dist's lips loosened for the first time looking really amused.

"So you aren't aware of it. No, it's only natural if you were devoting yourself to recuperation for two weeks after that intense battle."

Lux pondered after hearing that comment, and before long he produced an answer from his own thought.

"Is there some kind of new movement within the New Kingdom?"

"Indeed. When the situation is lapsing into chaos, there will be forces at work to calm down the situation. Now that the situation has calmed down, the people who are trying to cause waves are making their move."

It seemed his answer was correct.

While he was in the middle of recuperation, at most he would hear uncertain rumors within the academy, but from it he heard that there were several consuls introducing themselves in the attempt to run the current government in place of Queen Raffi.

Of course, the majority of the masses gave negative reactions to that.

After being liberated from the long reign of the Old Empire for five years, they didn't want to get tossed around by power struggles inside the country.

"But, the Lord Listelka used the Abyss called Shadow to lure out the representatives of each country. In the New Kingdom, the Shadows' strategy was to hold her majesty the Queen in contempt. In addition, because the New Kingdom got seriously damaged in the great war, voices from various places that were asking her majesty to take responsibility are getting louder. That is a fact."

".....Then, what is the relation of that with me becoming the center of discussion?"

"It's talk about the possibility of you becoming a powerful weapon for the influential people of the New Kingdom."

"_____"

Lux held his breath at Dist's statement that he said really naturally.

"This one year was full of upheaval. The assault of the Ragnarok, then there was also the appearance of the Lords, the rulers of the past that moved the very Ruins itself and threatened the country. There were also victims from that. The hearts of the people are ruled by anxiety, her majesty who is inexperienced with war as the sovereign of the country got looked down on,

and the consuls who belong to the Old Empire faction raised their hands in an attempt to stand on the front stage themselves."

"....."

"But, even that has calmed down to a certain degree right now. It's because you, the New Kingdom's Seven Dragon Paladin and Princess Lizsharte's knight brought victory to the New Kingdom."

Dist turned towards Lux after lightly gulping down his wine.

"You are someone who can influence even the Seven Dragon Paladins of other countries, and also the central character in Syvalles, the group that can possibly even become the main force of the New Kingdom in this period. If the leading actor of the military gains this time is the direct subordinate of Princess Lizsharte, then the people and also the consuls will have to recognize the result as her majesty's achievement too. But if it's looked from another perspective——"

"The present map of political power in the New Kingdom will be overwritten depending on the position that I display from here on.....is that what you mean?"

Dist confirmed towards Lux's serious expression.

"Just as you also know, we lost many Drag-Knights in that battle. Even in regards to the nurturing of Drag-Knight's, if someone can secure the [hero] who has also obtained support from the Royal Officer Academy, then their prospect in the government will also become clear with no obstruction. Can you imagine just how many nobles the headmaster had to refuse from visiting you during the two weeks you were recuperating?"

"....."

Lux comprehended the situation that was surrounding his position and fell silent.

He saved the world from the danger of destruction as a Seven Dragon Paladin.

Lux himself didn't have the slightest desire for authority.

In the first place he didn't even have the leeway to think about such thing.

But, now that the world had been saved without problem like this, the flow where people wanted to use Lux as a weapon in political strife seemed to be

growing even stronger than before.

The cornerstone of the next war potential.

If the existence that was considered as a hero in the New Kingdom entered under the banner of someone, the political map would be greatly changed.

"Even so, if you are still like before then there won't be any problem. You have obligation towards her majesty the Queen and the Princess, I also heard that your relationship with them is favorable. You still have the collar of a criminal put on you, but no one can find any fault even if it is taken off from you. Therefore, I'll ask you this."

Dist's expression suddenly tensed.

He fired off words like a bullet with a strong tone that questioned Lux's resolve.

"Do you really think that her majesty the Queen right now has the caliber that is worthy to bring the New Kingdom together? Do you think that you can entrust the future from here on to her? If I tell you that I'm backing someone else——"

"——"

Tension ran through the underground bar.

A great feudal lord who was a chosen even throughout the New Kingdom. There was no way Lux who in the past tried to cause a revolution against the Old Empire wouldn't be able to understand what kind of meaning there was inside the question of Dist who was the head of one of the Four Great Nobles.

The rewriting of the political map by making use of Lux's existence.

He was being invited in order to realize the matter that was explained to him just now.

"I heard from my daughter that she is close with you. This will depend on you but, I won't mind to present my daughter to you as proof of our alliance."

"....."

The confined and soundless space was filled with oppressive silence.

At the end of his pondering for a short while, Lux opened his mouth.

This talk was concluded a few minutes later and Lux was let go from the bar.

Part 2

"I'm back, Airi. —Wait, uwah!?"

In the reserved inn where several dozens of the Academy's students were staying.

When Lux opened the door of the hotel room that was assigned to him, an unexpected scene flew into his sight.

Sitting on the sofa inside were Sharis, Tillfur, and Noct, the familiar members of the Triad. The one who was on the bed looking small and quiet was Airi.

And then even further in front of them, there was the figure of a black haired girl kneeling before him.

"I have been waiting, Aruji-sama. It is truly joyous to see you in good health."

The one who was looking up to him with a feverish gaze was Kirihome Yoruka.

He was told by Airi that she was going to the Royal Capital for a while, so this was also his reunion with her after two weeks.

She wasn't wearing her uniform but the black outfit of the nation of Koto.

Although Lux was surprised by the sudden happening, he was happy to be able to reunite with a comrade who had gone through deathly battles together with him and responded to her with a smile.

"It has been a long time Yoruka. Are you well? I wonder how many days it has been since the last time we met."

When Lux relaxed his expression and talked to her, Yoruka showed a carefree smile and words were formed from her well-shaped lips.

"Oh my, Aruji-sama is such a joker. Since I woke up, most of the time I was always nearby Aruji-sama."

".....Yes?"

Lux froze after hearing the words that she muttered naturally.

No, there was no way that could be true.

At the very least he had no memory of seeing Yoruka for two weeks since he returned to the new kingdom and began recuperating.

"Then, it's me and Noct who won the bet with this. The payment will be after returning to Cross Field, so please pay with sweets and tea then."

When Airi told that smilingly, Tillfur sent a desperate gaze to Lux.

"Lux-chi, you noticed didn't you? I'm begging you please say sooo!"

"Err, just what is it about.....?"

When Lux asked back with an astonished expression, Airi smiled with a triumphant expression.

"It's just everyone overestimating Nii-san too much. After all Nii-san usually is so shockingly full of openings. It's naïve that they don't understand about that."

"Yes. I was betting on Lux-san not noticing, but I'm surprised instead in a different sense. It's unexpected that Yoruka-san didn't make any moves towards Lux-san at all in these two weeks."

Noct was expressing her impression matter-of-factly with her face staying expressionless in contrast to her tone.

Besides her Sharis was scratching her head with a face that looked shocked.

"Unfortunately I too was bothered by that. To think that missy Yoruka would grow such common sense."

"Err, can someone tell me what is going on already——"

When Lux timidly asked to the girls who were getting convinced by themselves, Airi nonchalantly told him.

"It's not like it's something important. We were betting whether in the end Nii-san would notice Yoruka-san guarding you or not while Nii-san was sleeping for two weeks. That's all."

".....Eeh!?"

When Lux opened his mouth with a dumbfounded look, Noct gave him an explanation in order.

Yoruka who recovered early from the previous battle personally offered to stay at Lux's side constantly.

But, Airi pointed out that if she did that Lux would become nervous instead and he might be unable to rest. Also, taking the possibility of Lux getting targeted by external enemies at this timing into account, the suggestion of [guarding in a way that even Lux himself wouldn't notice] was proposed.

The Triad who heard about that story from Airi made a suggestion playfully to kill time.

They were secretly betting whether Lux would notice Yoruka or not in these two weeks.

".....Haa, is that so."

Lux felt exhausted at the fact that he finally realized.

Certainly Yoruka's stealth ability was also something amazing, but Lux was reflecting in his heart for being unable to notice her in that long period.

Because, in the worst case that the opponent wasn't Yoruka, but a spy or a bandit like Dragon Marauder, it wouldn't be strange even if he had got his life taken away like that.

"But, it has been a long time since I went through trouble like that. Protecting Aruji-sama while hiding was——"

"Was there any suspicious signs or something?"

Airi gasped at Yoruka's implicative muttering and questioned her.

Lux also became curious and strained his ear, and then an unexpected answer came back.

"Yes. Seeing Aruji-sama unable to move his body satisfactorily, it made me want to help. It was really difficult to suppress my own desire. It was also the same at the times when Aruji-sama changed clothes in the bathroom or having a meal. Especially when Aruji-sama just woke up and it looked like his body was in pain——"

"....."

Yoruka's cheeks blushed and she showed an intoxicated expression. Everyone fell silent in response.

A few seconds later, Sharis sighed with an astonished expression.

"Looks like the existence of the [pact] was really helpful. Because of that Lux-kun's virginity just barely got away from danger."

"Yes. It seems this is a gamble that is more dangerous than expected."

"Lux-chi! You didn't get anything strange done to you right!? You are really okay right!?"

"Somehow I'm feeling really uneasy now....."

"Please rest assured, Aruji-sama. Every day I checked the inside of your clothing to see whether there would be anything slipped into them."

Yoruka showed a bright and wide smile. Seeing that, an awkward silence filled the room.

"Yoruka-san. Can you teach me later secretly just what did you do specifically?"

"Wai-!? I'm begging you, stop that! You don't need to say anything more than that so don't say it-!"

Lux screamed in order to drown out Airi's request.

He passed the time of reunion with the girls along with disturbance that was more stimulating than usual.

Part 3

The night of the day they arrived in the capital came. Tomorrow would be the parade.

After Lux passed a peaceful time chatting with the girls, for some reason he couldn't fall asleep so he went to the rooftop of the inn to feel the night wind.

"Yoruka, can you hear me? Can I ask you to take care of Airi?"

"Understood. I'll also watch out the surrounding with Yato no Kami's radar."

Lux smiled wryly at the reply that came from inside the darkness as though it was only natural.

He lightly waved his hand before climbing up the stair and opened the door.

"Somehow, this feels nostalgic."

The night scenery of the capital spread out.

Lux immersed himself in a deep feeling while watching the proof of the city's prosperity in the form of the lights in the town that looked like stars.

It had only been five years since the day of the Revolution.

The buildings themselves hadn't changed that much, and yet the scenery looked different from before.

Perhaps it was because Lux was getting involved with this country once more as a knight of the New Kingdom, or perhaps because his criminal self had made a lot of comrades.

Or perhaps——

—

[Is it because you noticed that you will lose them once more? Chore boy, it's about time to wake up from your dream.]

—

"——!?"

The mysterious voice that suddenly came into hearing made Lux focus his eyes.

He could see a silhouette near the edge of the inn's rooftop.

A man wearing a deep blue robe was standing with the azure moonlight behind him.

The vice captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Singlen Shelbrit.

Lux heard that after Singlen fought him at Avalon, he survived and returned to the Blackend Kingdom.

(But, why is this man in this place? If I remember right, that time he.....)

The string of memory he was pulling on snapped off.

When he focused his eyes, that figure vanished and in exchange a single Drag-Ride was landing down on the rooftop.

"What's with that face? This is a reunion after so long you know? You are my knight——.....after all."

"You are——"

The girl dispelled the armor along with a sulky look that looked somewhat vexed.

The blonde hair in sidetail fluttered in the wind.

Her gaze contained a heat like a flame that was hidden within her petite body.

Lux's expression naturally burst into a smile seeing the uniformed figure that was wearing a white coat.

"Lisha, sama?"

"Here I am Lux. That, you know, I really wanted to meet you....."

"—Yes."

Seeing Lisha averting her face in embarrassment, Lux jogged towards her.

Lux seemed to think of something and he was going to spread out his hands reflexively, but he then kneeled on the spot hurriedly.

(Wait, just what am I doing. Just now, it was as though I was going to.....)

Just now, did he almost try to hug Lisha spontaneously?

Lux was exasperated with himself for almost behaving like that unconsciously.

But Lisha who was also forming a smile when seeing that changed her expression into dissatisfaction.

"Just what's with you..... Even though, it's okay even if you continued with that just now."

"N, no-, more importantly it's great that Lisha-sama looks well. Is your body's condition alright already?"

"Well, I couldn't move satisfactorily during the first ten days though. Since I became able to use Over Unit, I can understand just how reckless you have been until now. No wonder your little sister is a worrywart like that."

"Ahaha....."

Lux smiled wryly at Lisha's implicit chiding of his excessive recklessness. But, even that had come to an end with the previous battle.

"And I'm thinking to have you take a break for a while from your chores, and not because of that reason. My official duty is going to increase a lot from now——"

"That means....."

"At the last day of the parade, I'll take off your collar. That's what I'm saying."

"——"

With the moonlight behind her, Lisha clenched both her hands and told him with a determined expression.

While the cool night air soaked into his skin, it felt like the time of the world had completely stopped.

Lux's right hand unconsciously reached towards his neck.

What his fingertip touched was the black criminal collar.

Since the failure at that day of revolution, Lux continued to shoulder this shackle by his own wish.

He was thinking that he wouldn't take it off until he found the answer of how he should live as a prince of the Old Empire.

But,

"I have seen your way of life and your fight since you entered the Academy. No——it's not just me. Even the people of this country should be aware of it too. There is already no one who will say that it's a mistake for you to take off the collar."

".....But, I——"

"As a princess of the New Kingdom, doing this also has another meaning of me putting up a good appearance to the people. And it's also something that my mother also agreed with."

".....Queen Raffi was?"

Lux recalled Dist's words after hearing the words that Lisha said while averting her gaze.

[Troublesome old timer nobles are crawling around trying to win you over with every kind of favorable treatment. Her majesty wants to take off your

collar to forestall them. Perhaps you have at least heard the rumor about it.] He could understand if it was a plan that was cooked up by Queen Raffi and Prime Minister Nulph.

In the long battle this time, various sacrifices were made and a lot of burden was also levied on the people.

In order to appease the people's dissatisfaction and stabilize the shaky foundation of the New Kingdom, the New Years parade would be combined with the triumphant return of Lux and the others as a political advertisement.

It was a decision to obtain popularity by displaying that the hero who saved the world, Lux, owed everything to Queen Raffi and Lisha.

Lisha's expression that was slightly sullen must be because she disliked political bargaining.

"But, I'll be in agreement if it's not in this kind of form. It's not right for you to continue feeling guilt forever just because you were an imperial family member of the Old Empire. I want you to stay by my side not because of anything like you are being collared, but because it's your own will."

Lisha took a deep breath and raised up a voice that was filled with emotion.

He could directly feel that she was pushing down her fear and summoned her courage from her pained and conflicted expression.

Those words didn't come from a princess who was talking about politics, but from a girl who knew Lux intimately.

It was the look of a friend who in this nearly one year had accepted Lux's existence.

Lux's heart trembled from hearing her wish.

The girl who was his master taught him the answer towards what he had accomplished until now.

At that time, the memory of the affair during the afternoon was revived in his mind.

The conversation that he exchanged with Celis's father, one of the Four Great Nobles, Dist Ralgris, half a day ago—

Part 4

"Do you really think that her majesty the queen right now has the caliber that is worthy to bring the New Kingdom together? Do you think that you can entrust the future from here on to her? If I tell you that I'm backing someone else——"

—

Dist said that with a stern tone inside the reserved underground bar.

A political strife by making use of Lux's status as a hero.

Queen Raffi had lost the trust from people because of the great war this time. At present the senior consuls were aiming for the throne.

This was an invitation for Lux to side with them instead of the queen who was losing her unifying force.

Someone who was supported by one of the Four Great Nobles, Dist, was attempting to announce himself as the new king using Lux as a weapon.

"I heard from my daughter that she is close with you. This will depend on you but, I won't mind to present my daughter to you as proof of our alliance."

Celis who raised achievements as an aide of the Seven Dragon Paladins also received high evaluation as an existence that supported Lux.

The two of them deepening their relationship and getting married was the natural flow even if looking at it objectively. Like that, the person who Dist was supporting could gather influence and support in a form that didn't feel out of place at all.

Lux could understand the meaning of that.

If Lux accepted Dist's words at face value, he could also understand that Dist too was grieving the future of the New Kingdom in his own way and tried to do something about it.

However——

"My apologies but, please allow me to treat this talk as though it never happened."

Lux told that and directed a calm smile at Dist.

In response, the man in the prime of his life didn't show any particular change in his attitude and,

"I see."

He only replied shortly like that.

"I wonder if my words aren't trustworthy enough for you. Or perhaps, are you bewildered because this story is too sudden?"

"It's not either of them."

Lux smiled wryly at Dist's question and faced him.

"I have faith in her majesty the Queen. I will support her majesty from now on together with Lisha-sama. It's still only five years since the collapse of the Old Empire. I believe this is a period of time where everyone has to cooperate with each other no matter what in order to change the old traditions and tendencies."

"I see."

Dist showed a quiet smile and peered into Lux's eyes.

"But, it might not be that easy just so you know. The heart of the populace isn't a simple thing. Sometimes it doesn't matter which side is the right one, the consciousness that wishes for a change can be born depending on the situation."

His tone contained no stammering.

He added more words on top of that as though to question Lux's resolve.

"Looking back at the results of the great war just now, the important negotiation to obtain the legacies and technologies of Avalon will begin in the future. Is it alright to leave it to her majesty at this rate? What are you going to do if she fails? How are you going to persuade the fellows clamoring that the result is unsatisfactory?"

"There is no other way than to observe the opinion in the congress and convince them with the result that her majesty the Queen achieved. It's the mission of Lisha-sama and I to think of what can be done about it and then doing our best."

"....."

"Of course, the cooperation of many people will be indispensable. Whether it's the Four Great Nobles or the consuls of the Old Empire faction, we all have to rack our brains together from here on and combine our strength to overcome any difficulty. I believe that your daughter—Celis-senpai too would give her cooperation."

"Hou."

Dist narrowed his eyes at Lux's unhesitating claim.

"If the current me am going to become a tool to unite the populace's sentiment, I want to be used for the sake of seeking everyone's cooperation. I believe that will be for the good of this country."

"....."

"Besides, Celis-senpai—your daughter, I believe she will dislike something like this. After all she is someone who is too kind and serious. That's why, I will treat this talk as though it never happened."

Lux said everything that should be said.

The bar was filled with silence and the time was slowly flowing.

After more than ten seconds passed, Dist emptied the contents of his glass with a gulp.

"It seems, that I might be misjudging you."

The stern aura that was enveloping Dist slackened slightly and he directed a gentle smile that possessed refinement towards Lux.

When Lux observed Dist's expression with a dubious look, his voice that replied back had an easy tone.

"A mere decoration that will only get toyed by the people in power and do anything he is told despite his impressive strength as a Drag-Knight. I didn't think that such man will be able to fascinate so many powerful warriors, even so it seems I made light of you too much. Now I'm relieved."

"Were you, testing me?"

A test by mimicking an influential person giving an invitation to win over Lux, like just now. Lux wondered if it was something like that.

But, Dist shook his head a bit and denied that.

"Half of it was my true feelings. If you don't have loyalty towards her majesty, and then, if you can be easily made to dance due to my words, then I will also have to consider that kind of path. After all I was also asked for cooperation by someone who is lamenting the future of the New Kingdom."

So to speak, in that case he would seriously sketch the future map where that person would replace the current ruling power as the new sovereign.

Lux deliberately didn't ask who that [lamenting person] could be.

"....."

"But, it doesn't look like that. Your caliber is not one that can be taken advantage of by that lot. In that case it's better for you to have your criminal collar removed by the princess on the last day of the parade. If you will make an oath to become the New Kingdom's sword, then that collar will be nothing more than a shackle."

"Then....."

"If there is something that I can do for the sake of the New Kingdom that is led by Queen Raffi, then I will give my cooperation. It's just as you say, my daughter too will surely wish for that."

"—Yes."

After Lux nodded strongly, Dist presented his right hand.

When he grasped that hand, the man told him in satisfaction.

"Take care of this country's future, oh the princess's knight."

"I will be relying on your encouragement, Lord Dist."

Lux understood his feeling and exchanged a courteous greeting.

Right after that, the lips of the rigid man suddenly loosened.

"It's okay even if you don't be such a stickler for manners in a private place like this. Depending on the situation from here on, the relationship of you and I might become one that is not a total stranger from each other."

".....Eh?"

When Lux tilted his head in incomprehension of those words' meaning, Dist filled his empty glass with wine that wasn't mixed with water this time.

"In these two weeks while my daughter came back to recuperate at home, I threatened her. I told her that a lot of marriage proposals are coming.

—No, the marriage proposals themselves in fact exist, and she is also at the marriageable age as a noble's daughter. And, what do you actually think? What is your impression of my daughter from your point of view?"

"Eh, that.....!? —Err"

Lux noticed that for some reason the direction of the talk had completely changed and he got bewildered.

It was mysterious. The stern atmosphere of Dist itself hadn't changed, but it felt like the inside had thoroughly changed.

To express it simply, it was like he changed from being one of the great nobles into a mere father—

"It's strange to say it myself but, if her aspect of being overly serious is excluded, then I believe her looks and talent aren't bad. You should be more knowledgeable about that than me, aren't you?"

Strange.

He got the feeling that the pressure from Dist was increasing even more than before instead.....

He even got the feeling that he wouldn't be able to return back safe and sound if he chose the wrong words here.

"I am an awkward man. No matter what I can only take a strict method when raising up the daughter of one of the Four Great Nobles. When I pretended to be a strict father on the surface, I ended up seriously treating her distantly. In addition when she was in the phase of hating men, even I could not approach her carelessly."

(.....This person, he is really Celis-senpai's father. There is no doubt about it!)

To think that both father and daughter were alike in having a personality that was easy to get into misunderstandings.

And then, as expected, even Lux could only be dumbfounded seeing how the father was actually also someone who easily felt lonely.

Lord Dist nonchalantly included boasting about his daughter in his talk, but could it be that actually even the father was misunderstanding Celis-senpai

with the man-hater thing?

"My daughter cooking when she was a child was devastating, but based from what she told me, even her cooking skills are improving recently. I think that it's not a bad thing but——"

No that was a lie.

No, perhaps in reality it was true that her cooking was improving, but Lux thought that it was still at a dangerous level.

It's dangerous to swallow your daughter's story whole like that you know? (Or rather, the image of Lord Dist inside me is in danger.....!)

What's with this, it feels like no one would believe him no matter who he told.

"Lord Dist. It will be time for us to head to the royal castle soon."

It seemed like the interrogation of Lux would still continue for some time, but a servant's voice came from outside the bar and Dist rose from his seat.

"Sorry to take your time like this. Let's continue this talk again someday."

"You're going to continue it!?"

Lux almost yelled those words reflexively, but he somehow succeeded in holding it back.

"Also, now that the path you are aiming for has become clear, then I guess it will be better to also tell you this beforehand. It's about a noble called Waybra Hemt."

"Waybra.....?"

Lux tried tracing his memory until the period of the Old Empire regarding that name, but he didn't remember hearing that name before.

"Perhaps even you have heard his name before but, the old-timer nobles who were supporting the Old Empire and still doing so even now are creating a faction of consuls called the [Old Empire faction]. They are a bunch who are criticizing the new kingdom's government and scheme to remove the queen if there is a chance. Recently that man joined their group."

When Lux tilted his head in confusion, Dist told him the answer with his next words.

"If that's all then originally it won't be a big problem, but for some reason the Old Empire faction was starting to become active radically after that. In the first place, Waybra is a man who was a distant relative of the imperial family. There is a possibility that he brought an advantageous information to the Old Empire faction."

Dist talked rapidly perhaps because he had no time while he was standing up and wearing his coat.

"I'm also watching out for him, he is an existence that might cause something in the middle of the parade. It has been two weeks since all of you succeeded in conquering Avalon. The Old Empire faction is starting to move behind the scenes. It seems they are forming a Drag-Knight force along with the second son of the house of Kreutzer, Sieg Kreutzer. The worst case might happen, so be careful."

"....."

Couldn't he talk about such an important case first?

Honestly speaking that was what Lux thought, but in reality Dist's side themselves might not know anything more than that.

But, even in the case that the Old Empire faction hounded Queen Raffi tenaciously to take responsibility, now that the Sacred Eclipse had been stopped and peace had come, it would be difficult to shake the foundation of her political power.

Much less something like the seizure of authority, such thing would be exceedingly impossible, if the other side did that then they would have no future.

(In any case, it will be better if I worry about not only Lisha-sama, but Airi too.)

Lux was putting up his guard once more in regards to the schemes swirling inside the New Kingdom and parted from Dist.

Part 5

"But, I'll be in agreement if it's not in this kind of form. It's not right for you to continue feeling guilt forever just because you were an imperial family member of the Old Empire. I want you to stay by my side not because of anything like you are being collared, but because it's your own will."

And then—now, on the rooftop of the inn the day before the New Year parade.

Lux's mind returned to this night when he was reunited with Lisha.

He had saved the world from the threat of Sacred Eclipse and accomplished military exploits that were appropriate to write off his crime of being an imperial family member of the Old Empire.

Lux who currently become a heroic existence of the New Kingdom would have his position that was serving Queen Raffi and Lisha displayed in order to heighten their unifying force towards the populace—. No, Lisha said that she wanted to take off Lux's collar unrelated to such political strategy.

She told him she wanted Lux whose crime was pardoned to serve her as her knight by his own will.

(Then, just like how I answered Lord Dist, I—)

This wasn't something to hesitate about.

After all, this girl who was always looking forward and fought even while feeling distressed of her own circumstances had allowed him to discover the ideal royalty that Lux once strongly desired.

"I understand Lisha-sama. If you will also include Airi in it, then I will happily accept the amnesty."

Lisha's eyes brightened at Lux's answer and she responded to that with a wide smile.

"Yeah! I'll be relying on you from here on too, Lux!"

The two of them looked and smiled at each other's face.

They were caught within an illusion of a warm atmosphere filling the inn's rooftop where they could see the city's lightings.

".....Wait, wait a second, what time is it!? Shit.....it's still not midnight yet."

Lisha gasped and recalled something. She then took out a pocket watch from her coat and confirmed the time.

When Lux tilted his head, she let out a somewhat lonely sigh.

"Haa....., there is still four more hours until the pact ends. E, even though it will be great if I can say it while the atmosphere finally became good like this....."

The pact was the agreement in regards to Lux that was participated by many girls, from Krulcifer until even Aeril.

Lux himself didn't know as far as the specifics of it, even so Lisha's nervous determination was conveyed to him from her expression.

"But, it can't be helped I guess. As a princess there is no way I can violate something that has been decided with everyone. Besides, I have to return to the castle now."

"Then, let's meet again at the parade tomorrow. I'm looking forward to it."

"No, wait a bit, that....."

When Lux tried to console Lisha who was looking conflicted, she was going to say something.

After looking troubled for a bit, she continued nervously looking like she found it hard to talk.

"That's, I'm feeling a bit uneasy for the banquet. I didn't have time to practice for the dance you see. You are my knight, so naturally you have the duty to dance, that's why——"

Lux guessed what she wanted to say seeing her mumbling figure.

Right after that, he presented a helping hand in front of this adorable princess without hesitation.

"I'm also in the same boat. After all I had been sleeping in recuperation all this time. Can I ask Lisha-sama to accompany this inexperienced me for a bit of dancing practice?"

".....ah"

A faint redness tinged Lisha's cheeks when she saw Lux's smile.

She timidly took his hand and relieve along with happiness emerged on her face.

"Thank you, Lux."

Lux and Lisha began to dance while in their uniform.

They were stepping on the rooftops's floor with inexperienced and clumsy steps.

Lux slowly took the lead with consideration.

The dazzling moonlight and the lighting of the vast townscape made the two's special relationship to come to the front.

"—It would be great if time stopped like this. I'm, happy."

Lux saw Lisha's relieved smile.

It was the same like that time Lisha was happily nibbling on apple pie when it still hadn't been long since they met each other, it was her natural smiling face. Lux's chest thumped strongly when he saw that adorable gesture.

(Could it be, this feeling is—)

He noticed himself that was strongly attracted to Lisha before he noticed it.

Whether it was her sublime passion that was like a blazing fire.

Or her pride as a princess, he thought of those as magnificent.

But, sometimes she would suddenly show her genuine self like this. Lux's eyes were stolen for a while.

—

"—See you later Lux. Tonight was fun."

It was only around five minutes, but they were able to spend a fulfilling time.

Lisha summoned her Drag-Ride and flew away. After parting from her, Lux returned from the rooftop to his room.

Lux laid down his body on the bed, but strangely his eyes were wide awake.

Recently he was feeling really unusual.

Lux was harboring even stronger feelings than before towards the girls in the Academy.

It wasn't just a feeling of affection, he was aware that he was harboring a clear feeling of like towards them.

(Geez, just what am I thinking of at this kind of time.....)

When he was about to think that it was imprudent of him, he noticed that it actually wasn't something that strange because of his talk with Lord Dist this afternoon.

Now that the battle surrounding Avalon had been settled and the criminal collar would be taken off from him, there was nothing that was tying Lux down.

There wouldn't be any problem even if he responded to the girls' feelings towards him.

As expected even Lux was starting to notice it vaguely.

No, until now he was unconsciously not thinking about it because of his particular personal history.

His status as a criminal who wouldn't be allowed to marry.

The environment inside the imperial family that treated him as unnecessary created a wall in his relationships with other people.

But, after the battle had reached an end, he noticed that he was coming to like the girls.

(Wait, what kind of convenient thing I'm thinking. Even though in the first place I don't even know if everyone likes me as a man or not.....)

When he closed his eyes, the figures of the comrades who were especially close to him, Lisha, Krulcifer, Celis, Philuffy, Yoruka, Aeryl, and the Triad came to the forefront of his mind.

The beating of his heart fastened, but he hurriedly shook his head on the bed.

"This is awkward. The matters I'm thinking about are becoming a lot when my free time is increasing——"

Lux muttered a remark that showed his familiarity with doing chores while taking a deep breath to sort his feeling.

Then, his conversation with Dist in the afternoon was revived inside his head.

"A noble of the Old Empire faction, Waybra Hemt huh....."

Just when the Sacred Eclipse had been stopped and the world was saved from danger, he caught a glimpse of the disturbing elements in the New Kingdom.

Although, when he thought back at all the powerful enemies until now, there was no doubt that this was an incomparably small concern in comparison.

Even if, for example, they secretly possessed a hidden force of Drag-Knights, surely the quality and quantity would be far behind Dragon Marauder, and not to even mention the Lords.

Because, if they had that much power, there was no way they would stay quiet during the previous great war.

Naturally, Lux also had no intention to let his guard down, but it wasn't a big deal.

(But, why is it. Why am I feeling this worried about a man who I have never even heard of before?)

Strictly speaking, he was concerned not towards that man himself, but at the phenomenon.

He was being caught in a misapprehension as though he had an idea from some time ago about that existence that might shake the foundation of the New Kingdom.

"As I thought, it looks like I'm still tired."

Lux's mutter was mixed with a sigh and he slowly closed his eyes.

"——....."

The voice of someone could be heard inside the darkness.

The whispering voice of a man that sounded ridiculing.

The existence that shouldn't even have any shadow or shape slipped into Lux's consciousness.

But, the current Lux didn't notice that.

Like that his consciousness was falling as though getting sucked into the abyss of darkness.

Episode 3 – The Fated, Confession

Part 1

The sounds of fireworks could be heard from early in the morning at the Royal Capital's castle town.

On the first day of the parade that celebrated the New Year, the royal family showed their faces from a horse carriage along with the soldiers' march.

Naturally Lux also escorted Lisha. At the schedule they would act together throughout the morning.

By the way, Airi was also with them for some reason.

"Look over here, Dragon Paladin-sama——!"

"This too is thanks to knight-dono! Thank you!"

Confetti danced in the air and red tapestries were hanging from the buildings. Amidst that, Lux was showing a smile to the people from inside the carriage and responded with a hand wave.

When the females cheered, Airi beside him whispered with a smile.

"What's with your slovenly expression there, Nii-san? It looks like you are having a lot of fun even though this is official business."

Perhaps she was jealous at the rare cheering from the females. It was scary how there were shadows covering the area around her eyes.

"Wait, I'm not looking slovenly or anything! Besides in reality there is no way I can make a grim face in this kind of event. Also, Airi yourself is really popular out there."

In fact the cheers from the men of the city towards Airi who was wearing a dress were also loud.

Even if his bias as a big brother was docked, there was no denying that Airi was a lovely girl. Her graceful demeanor that was befitting an imperial princess was also popular.

Even so, for the two of them who were originally criminals of the Old Empire that carried out misgovernment to the extremes, to be received this well by the people showed that right now the tide of society was accepting them.

"I'm already popular with a part of the populace since the past. After all, unlike the clumsy Nii-san, I'm really good at acting friendly."

"Ah, is that so....."

Lux lost his words seeing Airi who was smiling teasingly.

While he was feeling the ominousness of his little sister's political ability that likely would grow worse in the future, the carriage approached the main street and they caught sight of the Academy's students lining up while waving their hands.

The cheers became remarkably louder, and then the sound of a Drag-Ride's driving force came from the surroundings.

"-.....!? This sound!"

Lux and Airi reflexively put up their guard, but they noticed that it was only their needless anxiety seeing the smile of Lisha who was looking back from the seat in front of them.

When he looked closer, it was the Triad who were wearing Drag-Knights out there. Sharis was scattering flower petals from the sky using her Wyvern.

"Thanks for your effort today, Lux-kun. And also princess Lisha."

"Thank youu! The three of you!"

"Yes. Congratulations, Airi."

Sharis, Tillfur, and Noct called out to them not because of their professional duty but as a friend from the Academy.

The expressions that Lux and Airi were making before looked somewhat business-like, but the display of the girls brought back a natural smile to their faces.

"The New Kingdom will also be peaceful with you guys here!"

"Keep up the hard work from here on too! Princess-sama and knight-dono!"

People with various appearances, young and old, man and woman.

Cheers where it was irrelevant whether it came from a noble or a commoner were reverberating loudly through the main street of the Royal Capital Lordgalia.

The marching of the horse carriage continued for a while and the cheers that came from everywhere didn't stop coming.

Part 2

"Haaa, I'm tireed....."

After finishing the greeting to the people from the horse carriage that took a total of four hours and returning back to the inn, Lux took off his coat and threw his body on the bed.

Inside the room, there were Airi who was also accompanying him in the marching parade and Philuffy who was riding the carriage behind them as a guard. In addition even the Triad came to play.

"That's really slovenly, Nii-san. It's really astonishing that the hero who saved the world is acting like this."

Airi was also showing a slightly worn-out expression, and yet her back was still firmly straight while she was sitting on the sofa together with Noct.

"As expected even Lux-kun looks beaten up. Though the mental fatigue seems to be more serious."

"Ain't that riight. It's rare to see Lux-chi that tired after doing his usual chores."

After Sharis concluded straightforwardly, Tillfur also poked fun at Lux in amusement.

"Yes. It can't be helped. After all, this kind of diplomatic exchange is Airi's field in the first place."

"It's a daily trouble for me to settle down the various commotions that Nii-san causes at the Academy you know?"

"It's my loss, so let me stay like this for a while....."

Lux was drained of strength and raised a white flag toward Airi's proud smile.

But in reality, there was a reason that it was Lux who got his nerves worn down like this.

A part of it was also because he was doing this parade that he wasn't used to, but in the end he didn't see any glimpse of the man called Waybra who was staying in his mind during the parade.

In the first place a heavy security was laid out during the parade, so it could only be said as natural.

"I'm also tired. I was holding back, the sleepiness."

"I think that Philuffy-san was sleeping during the parade though. Just because nobody can see you inside the carriage at the rear....."

Airi spontaneously sent a retort at the muttering of the sleepy looking Philuffy.

Well, she might be sleeping for half of the event, but even Philuffy was doing a splendid job guarding Lux and Airi.

Today was over with this, but tomorrow there would be a parade at the castle waiting for them.

There he would be able to reunite with Krulcifer, Celis, Aeryl, and the Seven Dragon Paladins who arrived as guests of honor.

Although each of them was wounded from the intense battle the other day, everyone safely survived.

It had been two weeks since they last saw each other, so he was looking forward to meeting them again.

—

"—Everyone is safe you say? You are a heartless man huh, chore boy."

—

".....-!?"

The ridiculing voice that Lux suddenly heard made him turn around to behind him.

But, there was no one there.

There were only the familiar girls inside the room that he shared with Airi.

"Eh? What's the matter, Lux-chi?"

Tillfur asked with a pose where she was placing both her hands behind her head.

"No. It's, nothing....."

"Fuh, it seems that Lux-kun is still tired. We should give him a massage here at least. After that please tell us who made you feel good the most."

"Wait, what are you planning to start!?"

Even the discomfort just now was blown away by Sharis's invitation.

"Lux-kun, lie down on your face and wear a blindfold. Now, let's decide the turn with rock-paper-scissors! The number one will get Lux-kun returning the favor with his massage."

"Noo objection!"

"Say, do I have any say in this?"

"Yes. The honor of the Leaflet name is at stake, so I cannot lose."

"I also, want to give Lu-chan a massage."

For some reason even Noct and Philuffy got motivated. Airi sighed in exasperation.

In the middle of the massages, it was really difficult for him to feign calmness when the girls' breasts touched his back.

—

—An hour after that.

A party only for the students who came to the capital began in the large bar that Relie reserved for them.

They praised the victory and the peace that they had wrested back and shared the happiness that everyone returned alive safely.

Everyone spent time until late at night while drinking, singing, and conversing a lot.

Part 3

"I'll go, to feel the night wind for a bit....."

Lux who was plenty drunk because he got poured alcohol by many girls got out of the bar.

Perhaps because it was in the middle of the parade's period, even though the time was January where the weather was chilly, it felt like the town was brimming with feverish enthusiasm.

There was also no sign of people at the royal capital's central square perhaps because it was late at night.

It was a place for relaxation that was surrounded by a lawn with short grass and trees that were dropping down their leaves.

The flame of the street lights had also vanished, but the moonlight was faintly illuminating the area.

".....Nothing has happened yet. Yoruka too, it would be better if you participated in the party."

"That consideration is enough for me, Aruji-sama."

When Lux mumbled that to himself, Yoruka appeared out of nowhere beside him.

Yoruka had been constantly hiding starting from the parade until the party after that. She was watching out alertly at the surroundings of Lux and Airi.

The opposing noble called Waybra who was colluding with the Old Empire faction.

Lux wouldn't make Yoruka do something like that if he hadn't heard about the story of that person.

Of course, the person herself also offered to do such thing by her own initiative, but Lux was regretful that he was unable to make her participate in the party just now.

"Doing this is more comfortable for me. Besides, Airi-san and the others were inviting me while Aruji-sama was resting."

It seemed that Airi and the Triad were frequently paying attention to Yoruka.

Lux patted down his chest in relieve and said his gratitude to Yoruka once more.

"I'm really thankful. I'll compensate it to you for sure when this parade is over. No. If it doesn't look like there will be any problem, then even now you can join the party——"

"Is that so? Then, please allow me to be together alone with Aruji-sama later. I also have something that I wish to tell Aruji-sama after all——"

"Eh.....?"

Yoruka's eyes suddenly brightened bewitchingly. Lux was shaken by her response.

The devilish blue and purple eyes.

Her gaze that was tinged with feverish desire made Lux's heart skip a beat.

After her battle against Singlen, Yoruka who didn't possess emotions was harboring a certain special feeling, which she directed only towards her master, Lux.

She said that she might be in love with Lux.

She told him that she wanted him to teach her the way to love to ascertain that feeling.

That flow of events was halted because of the incidents that were happening one after another. And Lux himself was also very busy with the battles before him at that time, but——

"Yoruka....."

Now Lux had accomplished his own mission and objective, and the shackle of criminal status would vanish.

An urge towards her was welling up inside him.

The girl who was feared as the Empire's Assassin Blade was beautiful as expected when he looked at her once more.

The long and smooth black hair, the asymmetrically colored eyes.

The seductive soft skin that peeked out from the gap of the exotic looking foreign outfit was radiant like fresh snow.

But, it wasn't just the beauty of her outward appearance.

The way of her heart——its pureness that was like a single katana attracted Lux.

The instant his hand was going to reach out as though he was being pulled, Yoruka smiled with a lonely look.

"A coincidence..... No, it's fate. If time deviated only for a bit, even I would have a chance where I might become human, and yet..."

"Yoruka.....?"

"Surely, that's also just an excuse.The presence of someone is approaching this way. Aruji-sama, please take some rest without worry. No matter who comes, I won't kill them right away."

Yoruka only said that and left from that place soundlessly.

She said some dangerous words but, had an enemy appeared?

However, seeing how Yoruka didn't look that alarmed, most likely it wasn't a clear threat that was approaching here.

Even so there was also the existence of the man called Waybra, perhaps it would be dangerous to cool off alone at this kind of place.

"Perhaps it will be better if I go back to the bar early. —.....-!?"

The instant he muttered that, a sound suddenly came from the bush behind. Lux closed his mouth with his hand in panic.

Lux watched out at his surroundings and killed his presence, then he hid behind the shadow of a tree nearby.

(It's not just sound. It's a human voice. What's more, it's a woman's voice—)

Lux walked carefully so as to not make any sound and progressed towards the direction of the voice.

Then, he saw a lone girl standing under a tree at the center of the square.

"—That's right. I wanted to speak to you."

Lux gasped the instant he saw the girl.

Under the moonlight, the girl was facing a large tree and repeatedly spoke something to herself.

The honey colored blond hair, the bulging out voluptuous breasts and tight waist.

The feminine beauty that had balanced proportions looked radiant inside the darkness of the night.

Celistia Ralgris.

She was his senior in Syvalles, and also Lux's aide in the Seven Dragon Paladins.

She was an older girl with striking dignity while also emitting loveliness at the same time.

Lux's heart danced at the nostalgic reunion with the existence who he felt respect and affection towards.

He was feeling a sweet throbbing in his heart was surely because he was harboring a remarkably high fondness towards her just like with the other girls.

Lux was about to walk towards her right away, but he hesitated when he guessed that Celis was talking to herself.

(Wait, to talk to herself even at this kind of time, senpai hasn't changed at all.....)

Because she didn't have anyone who she could consult or complain to, she had the habit of talking to an object or an animal sometimes. It seemed that habit still hadn't been fixed.

Though he thought that recently the number of her talking partners had increased, like Sharis or the members of Syvalles.

She had a personality that made it easy for others to misunderstand her. She was even thought by the surroundings to be a man-hater, but fortunately she was opening her heart towards Lux.

(But, if she is worried about something, I should see if I can give advice——)

Thinking that Lux approached her. It was at that timing that he could hear her monologue clearly.

—

"——Lux. I love you."

—

Lux was taken by surprise and his feet—no, even his thoughts became blank and halted completely.

The instant he was doubting that he might have misheard that or perhaps he was dreaming, Celis continued her words further.

"Not as my junior in the Academy, or even as a Drag-Knight. I love you as a man."

Celis continued with a sweet and easeful smile while her left hand was placed on her large breast.

Celis hadn't noticed Lux's existence.

However, Lux finally guessed that Celis wasn't choosing a large tree simply to make her complaints.

(This is, don't tell me..... Celis-senpai, towards me is—?)

Celis took a deep breath, held her breath, and exhaled out white breath in the winter air several times.

But, her expression didn't look like she was feeling the coldness at all.

Flames of passion was emerging out on her face as though she was delirious with fever.

".....As I thought, I cannot get used to it. I think that as the older one I am the one who ought to say it but, I'm really nervous. When I'm thinking what if I get rejected, it feels like my heart is tightened hard."

Celis slipped out those words along with a wry smile after a pause for a while.

Lux spontaneously turned speechless seeing from the side that beautiful face which was trembling with a heartrending look.

"This is scarier than before any fight. But—I have to summon my courage. After all even I, finally found something that makes me want to speak selfishly."

"....."

Celis moved away from that place when her training with the large tree finished.

It seemed that by coincidence the inn she was staying at was close to the lodging place of Lux and the others.

Lux unintentionally heard her confession because he slipped out from the party on a whim.

"——"

A deep sigh slipped out from the lungs.

The breathed out sigh was terribly hot.

"Celis-senpai..... I——"

There were several times when he was conscious of her as a woman.

But, until now Lux was a criminal who wasn't even allowed to marry. With his situation where he was chasing after Fugil, that feeling didn't grow so far until it took shape.

In addition, Lux himself would naturally create a wall towards an environment where he was considered as special or towards the love from other people.

But, the battle at Avalon was over now and his criminal collar would be taken off at the last day of the parade.

"....."

Lux asked to himself once more about his feelings towards the girls.

After standing still at that place for a while, he returned to the bar.

The night of the parade's first day was getting late.

He made merry with everyone from the Academy. His consciousness was melting into a tranquility that was like a dream.

Even amidst that, Celis's words wouldn't leave from his head.

Part 4

Inside the darkness of night, two men were inside an abandoned building in the Royal Capital.

One of them was wearing a dark blue tailcoat suit. He was a man with handsome features.

The other man was a young blonde haired man with a somewhat shadowed expression.

He was wearing a plain cloak while his eyes glinted sharply.

This place was a part of the residential area that was crushed underfoot by the Fifth Ruin, Gigas in the past.

The collapsed houses were gradually rebuilt from the surroundings, but an untouched block turned half into a slum. This building was abandoned because it was hard to lived in even in such an area.

"Won't we get misunderstood by talking in this kind of place? I don't want to get unjustly suspected by the supporters of the New Kingdom you know?"

The man wearing a tailcoat suit smiled wryly under the hat that he was wearing over his eyes.

The man's name was Waybra Hemt.

A distant relative of the Old Empire's imperial family—strictly speaking this man was an adopted child of a kin.

He looked like he was in the middle of his thirties, he was tall with a well featured face, but he was enveloped in a dangerous atmosphere that would make other people feel anxious.

"Don't worry, no one will approach this kind of garbage dump. And the security guards are also lacking in number when the parade is going on like this."

"The scar of the great war is really deep. Her majesty the Queen got into a large debt not only towards the Four Great Nobles, but even towards all the feudal lords. Of course you too—aren't satisfied with just that, correct, next family head-dono?"

"Fu——"

The blonde haired man slipped out a smile at the question of the man in a tailcoat suit.

His name wasn't mentioned, but the young man's name was Sieg Kreutzer.

He came from one of the Four Great Nobles who were great feudal lords of the New Kingdom, but after the eldest son Balzerite lost his standing, the

house of Kreutzer tasted misfortune for a long time.

The second son and the next successor of the house was this man.

"Our house also mobilized all our strength and distinguished ourselves in this war. But, it's still far away until the debt from my foolish brother is cleared. We won't be able to face our great ancestors if it ends like this. You are also the same right?"

There was no doubt that the house's position was restored somewhat due to their cooperation in the decisive battle against the Lords.

But, in the end that was all.

With the house's position that was looked down at as traitors, the result this time was nothing more than a bit of change for the better.

The ambition of the house of Kreutzer that was chosen as the next term's general of the New Kingdom.

Their longstanding desire to obtain the technologies and legacies of Avalon and stand at the top in the end closed its curtain as an ephemeral dream.

The house of Kreutzer's standing to interfere with the distribution of Avalon's legacies was also endlessly little.

Among the Four Great Nobles, it was the house of Ralgris which was the one with the greatest distinguished service, so the house of Kreutzer also couldn't expect any rewards in the future.

With their inability to obtain the money tree in the form of the right to use the Ruins, it could be expected that it would be a really long road to restore their house in the future.

But, that was before this man called Waybra Hemt showed his figure before the house of Kreutzer.

Sieg thought that this man was like a vulture—no, a poisonous snake.

He lurked in the darkness and polished his poisonous fangs while pretending to be harmless.

Having said that, it wasn't like this man possessed the ability as a Drag-Knight or the horn flute to control the Abyss.

What the man possessed in his grasp, was a secret.

He was covertly hiding a fiercely poisonous fang that could shake the structure of the New Kingdom.

Although, until now it wasn't useful because of the difficult problems like Sacred Eclipse or the Lords.

It possessed meaning because it was right now when peace had come after the world scale threat went away like this.

"And, are you able to prepare the private army to pretend as the rebel army?"

"Yeah, only around thirty Drag-Knights, and their skills are also not much to talk about. They will be helpless even against one of the main force of Syvalles where that Lux belongs to."

In reality, even in the middle of the parade's progression, Sieg's subordinates were dressing as security guards and observed the event.

But, they were unable to detect Yoruka's presence at all using radar, so they didn't do anything suspicious.

"But, it's fine like that. It will be worth it to steal them the stronger they are."

"I see, so your preparation is perfect. As expected."

Waybra lightly bowed, but Sieg's expression was unwavering.

"Keep the flattery for later. If you want to curry favor from me, you can do it after the strategy succeeds. Now show me that aforementioned trump card you have."

"But of course. Then, just as promised I will send the duplicate recording to your EX Drake. Please prepare."

Waybra pulled out the Sword Device of a special equipment type general purpose Drag-Ride Drake in his sword belt and summoned it.

In response Sieg Kreutzer also wore the strengthened type EX Drake and used its function. The transfer of the recording started.

—Five years ago.

It was a certain scene that happened at the other side of the incident where the Old Empire collapsed due to the revolution.

It wasn't a scene that happened at the side of the Old Empire, but a truth that occurred at the side of the great man Count Atismata.

The recording was projected at the vacant land of the abandoned building before their eyes and it began playing.

Sieg finished confirming the seven recordings that Waybra recorded.

He had heard about it beforehand, but there was no mistake about it.

If this fact became known by the world—the foundation of the New Kingdom would crumble.

"—Fu, hahahaha! Great! As expected politics has to be like this! This is exactly the field where I can display my true calling! With this the house of Kreutzer can take back our glory! No, trivial things like my foolish brother's stigma can be erased and I'll be able to take this country!"

Sieg formed a malicious smile that was filled with conviction and his thin body shook with the joy that was welling up inside him.

Just now the execution of the plan that he was scheming was decided.

"So what do you think, new family head-dono? How will the scheme to take down the New Kingdom go?"

Waybra threw a question at his satisfied employer.

"It's possible to handle anything. I already obtained the support from the Old Empire faction that wishes to take back the political power from the Queen. In the unlikeliest chance that the negotiation breaks down, I will obtain this country with a legitimate means."

"Then, let's carry it out in the middle of the parade. I will also accompany you, poor though my ability may be."

"—I'll rely on you, my sword friend, my right hand man who cuts open the way for my path of conquest."

Thus, a new spark of conflict was born in a corner of the Royal Capital.

No, wrong.

The embers of karma that existed from the day of the revolution five years ago—and even longer before that had blazed up with a momentum that would swallow the New Kingdom.

—

".....Target, found nanodesu."

A girl covered with white robe that hid even the eyes was looking down on them from a tall abandoned building.

The lifeless robotic eyes and the growing mechanical rabbit ears which were proof of the girl's inhuman state were observing the men's actions while staying hidden.

The men would signal a new beginning, the same as history repeating like the wheel of death and rebirth. On the other hand, they didn't notice the ambush that was lying in wait.

If a crack entering the system was also an inevitability of the era, the example of such thing getting destroyed inside the darkness also existed in a number of ways.

Just like how the Old Empire maintained its glory like that in the past.

Episode 4 – Between the Line of the End and the Beginning

Part 1

The morning of the third day that was the last day of the parade finally arrived.

"Good morning Nii-san. What's with that face right from the morning? Today is your big moment, so please look sharper."

Ten seconds after Lux woke up in a room of the inn, he got hit by Airi's nitpicking.

But, it was reasonable.

On the second day yesterday, because Lux was one of the leading actors at the banquet in the castle, and then because he had an important position even in the New Kingdom, he was surrounded by the nobles and influential

people from countries all over the world. He was made to drink and paid attention to them.

"I'll go wash my face for a bit. The alcohol is still remaining in my system but, I'll let it all out before the commendation ceremony."

Lux headed to the washing place with heavy footsteps.

Yesterday he was at a bustling party from noon until late at night.

He talked with the representatives from various countries including the Seven Dragon Paladins, and then got reunited with Krulcifer, Celis, and Aeril after so long. He talked a lot with them and shared happiness with each other.

Perhaps thanks to Philuffy, who came along as the bodyguard of Lux and Lisha, and Yoruka, who was in charge of the security outside, no accident happened at all even at the party where a lot of important people were gathered. Today—the third day of the parade safely arrived.

On the last day of the New Year parade, her majesty the Queen would give an admonitory speech towards the populace from the terrace that was jutting out from the castle. And today there would be an even more important announcement.

The members of Syvalles would be given commendation in front of the masses and at the end Lux and Airi would be freed from their collars.

After that a celebration would be held in the castle and the next morning they would ride horse carriages back to Cross Field.

With that it would be the end.

The battle to save the world from the unprecedented threat of Sacred Eclipse would close its curtains and from here on Lux would head to the place of negotiation to divide the assets of Avalon as Lisha's knight.

But, at the same time he had to produce an answer for one other problem before this time period was over.

At any rate when this parade ended, the girls would surely convey their feelings to him.

Until now, Lux was thinking that he had no qualification to be chosen by the girls.

Even if he was harboring strong feelings towards them, it wouldn't take shape in reality, however—

"Perhaps, I have been running away all this time."

In his childhood, as the youngest brother who was far away from possessing any authority, he was placed in a reality where he was made light of even amidst the imperial family.

He had a past where he became the target of hatred from the populace after he was banished from the imperial court due to his grandfather's case.

He became accepted by the populace through his chores livelihood for five years and everyone in the Academy treated him well. Even so, he was scared at the bottom of his heart.

If in the future his position changed and the way everyone looked at him also changed, surely he wouldn't be able to endure it for sure this time, so he avoided from facing them seriously.

However—

"I'll go to the capital's arena. I'm going to come back before noon."

"Nii-san?"

It would be troubling if his presence caused a commotion, so he hid his face under a hood and asked Relie to arrange a horse carriage.

He was advised to bring Philuffy as a guard, but he wanted to be alone so he refused it.

Yoruka was..... he made her to guard Airi just in case, and he kept it like that.

Naturally, in the middle of the period of the New Years parade, there was no one who was riding their Drag-Rides other than the security.

Originally it was not permitted to even use a Drag-Ride at the arena, but he said that he wanted to test his Drag-Ride and received permission.

"—Come, the winged dragon of crest that is the symbol of power. Obey my sword and soar, Wyvern."

Lux wore the Wyvern that had been repaired and ascertained its usability.

He performed the basic control in the place of warm-up exercise and gradually progressed to the practical operations.

While he was controlling the Drag-Ride with a concentration that was free from any obstructive thoughts, his heart was growing serene like the blue sky.

At the same time, he also obtained the answer for the feeling that was born inside him.

"—Thank you, everyone."

The resolved Lux sweated and got back to the inn.

It was chilly under the winter sky, but it felt as though his body was tense instead.

Part 2

And then, sunset arrived on the parade's last day.

At the streets of the Royal Capital, in front of the terrace that was jutting out from the castle, a lot of people were gathering.

Along with the heat that was created from the countless torches in iron baskets, the people's expectations were swirling before the commendation ceremony for the military exploits that would be carried out after this.

First, Prime Minister Nulph who was accompanying Queen Raffi surveyed the populace and raised his voice with a fervent speech.

"Then, just as planned, the commendation ceremony for the people who rendered distinguished military service in the last battle will begin. Various trials had been imposed on the New Kingdom from last year until this year! Because of the Abyss's attack, the rebel army's threat, the appearance of the Lords, and furthermore the battle revolving around Avalon caused many Drag-Knights to be lost. It also put the people through a lot of hardships."

He closed his eyes looking like he was thinking back deeply before continuing his talk after an interval of time.

"However, we were victorious! Their armed might defeated the aggressors from the ancient era, the Lords, suppressed the center of the Ruins Avalon, and sealed the Sacred Eclipse. After this we will negotiate with all the other

countries, to ascertain our spirit of cooperation while making use of the Ruin's power for the sake of peace and prosperity!"

—OOOOOOOH!

Noisy cheers were created like a ripple before receding.

Inside, Lux was feeling somewhat bothered that the Lords were treated like aggressors, but when considering the New Kingdom's dignity, there was no other choice than treating them as the bad guys.

He was worried about Aeril, but her safety was guaranteed, so from now on Lux could only pay attention to her situation.

"Participating in the last decisive battle and becoming the people who rendered the greatest distinguished service was the raid force of the Academy, who will bear the future of our New Kingdom. It's our wish to extol the bravery and strength of Syvalles and give them commendations on this occasion. Come forward!"

Obeying Prime Minister Nulph's voice, the Syvalles members including Lux lined up on the castle's terrace.

Lisha, Krulcifer, Philuffy, Celis, Airi, the Triad.

The government wanted to emphasize their status as students, so everyone was wearing the Academy uniform.

Yoruka had also been invited several times to participate, but she completely refused because it would make it harder for her to act covertly if she went out in the open.

The plan was to at least give her the reward money directly.

—

"Thank you for protecting our country!"

"The future of the New Kingdom will be secure from here on too! We'll rely on you guys!"

"We cannot call you criminals or chore prince anymore huh, hero who saved the world!"

—

While cheers of compliments boiled up from the populace, a single voice that could be heard in the middle caused Lisha to smile.

She turned her head a bit to meet Lux's gaze and they both nodded slightly to each other.

"Then, I too have news for all of the people here."

Next Queen Raffi walked forward at the timing when the waves of cheers were calming down.

She cleared her throat and exposed her graceful smile to the eyes of the public.

"This time due to my inexperience, a lot of burden was forced on all of you. The damage that the New Kingdom received was also great. Various issues are also remaining in order for this country to stand up again. If I can speak my mind honestly, this is a situation where I don't even have the self-confidence as this country's sovereign."

"....."

The expression of the people that was filled to the brim with joy was tinged with anxiety after hearing Queen Raffi's uncertain words.

Lux who was reunited with her once more at this place also felt the same.

She was also showing a pessimistic figure to Lux and Lisha at the fortress in the abandoned capital Guernica.

Lux was feeling bewildered that she was making such a remark even at the event of the New Years parade.

Lux was going to say something, but beside him Lisha tapped his back.

She didn't say anything, but her self-assured smile was telling him "Don't worry".

"—But, at this chance, I received help from so many people. The heads of the Four Great Nobles who possess their own order of Drag-Knights, Prime Minister Nulph and the consuls, the representatives of other countries, all of the citizens of this country. I can say without a doubt that this victory would be beyond our reach without the support of all those people."

Raffi raised her face and showed a gentle smile while saying that.

"The long history of the Old Empire was changed into this new monarchy. This foolish me was going to give up halfway through. I couldn't even succeed the will of my elder brother who fought to change the old tradition."

'But'—Queen Raffi said that word as a preface and walked to the front. Toward the side of Lux and Lisha who were waiting for her next words with a tense look.

"The resolve of these two illuminated my path. They who should still be young and inexperienced didn't lose heart towards the heavy weight of responsibility and cut open the way to the future. Their attitude and achievements who put their all to advance forward in the present is something that all the people of this country, including me, ought to learn from. That's what I believe."

Queen Raffi's speech made all the gathered people lose their words. They imagined the content of her next words and stared fixedly at her while holding their breath in expectation.

"I swear that I will accomplish my duty as queen from here on too. At the same time I also wish to bestow to them the reward of amnesty. The criminal collar of the Old Empire's imperial family, Lux Arcadia and Airi Arcadia. I want to take it off in this place."

"——....."

The terrace of the castle was enveloped with even deeper silence than before.

But, the sound of clapping hands resounded from somewhere among the crowd. It naturally rippled through the whole crowd and applause that split the eardrums thundered loudly.

"——Looks like their answer is clear. Congratulations, Lux-kun."

Krulcifer who came to his side first placed her hand on Lux's shoulder and smiled at him.

Celis and Philuffy who saw that also slowly walked to his side.

"Congratulations, Lux."

"Congrats, Lu-chan."

"Yes. Thank you, everyone."

When Lux replied back with a smile, the Triad also immediately gathered around him.

After Tillfur and Sharis also said their congratulations to him, Airi puffed up her cheeks in dissatisfaction.

"Excuse me, I too will also have my collar taken off you know....."

"Yes. Congratulations Airi. Also Lux-san too."

"It's only Noct who is saying that to me."

Airi hugged Noct tightly. Seeing that everyone hurriedly turned towards Airi.

"It's alright everyone, it doesn't really matter. Congratulations Nii-san."

The sulking Airi loosened her expression and gazed at Lux with an upturned stare.

Lux felt gratitude to his little sister who in these five years had been concerned about his standing all this time and gently caressed her head.

"Well, though honestly speaking, I'm feeling conflicted now. —Haa, with this it's finally time huh."

".....? What's wrong, Airi?"

Lux didn't understand the emotion of Airi who was puffing up her cheeks with some dissatisfaction and he tilted his head.

Then, Noct whispered into Lux's ear.

"Yes. The heart of a maiden is complicated. I will follow up with Airi, so don't worry."

"I don't really understand but, please."

Lux smiled wryly while saying that to Noct, then Lisha came towards him with an exasperated look.

"You all, do that kind of thing after returning to the Academy! Where do you think you are right now!?"

Lisha who was behaving as a princess until now couldn't endure the casual conversation of the others and exploded.

Krulcifer made fun of her further because of that before Lux together with everyone of Syvalles bowed towards the gathered people.

The cheers that rang out for long without stopping were enveloping the terrace of the castle.

And then, the last night of the parade was growing late.

Part 3

After the commendation ceremony, a banquet was held inside the castle where only important people and people related to Syvalles were invited.

The main participants were Queen Raffi and Prime Minister Nulph, and then Relie and the Four Great Nobles along with their aides.

Curiously, the vice commander of the military, Sharis's father was also present.

It was only the house of Kreutzer who seemed to leave the party early, perhaps because of the incident in the past, but after that the party continued peacefully without any problem.

"Then you know, everyone in the Academy said it. What will happen to the piling up chore requests for Lux-kun!? They said. Lux-chi isn't a criminal anymore after all, so I told them to just give up graciously. Geez."

In a corner of that party.

Tillfur who was completely drunk was holding up Lux with a red face.

She was circling her arm on Lux's shoulder while pouring wine into Lux's glass until the content was going to spill out.

The atmosphere of everyone last night was tense, but today after only one hour since the opening of the party, Tillfur was already in this state. Perhaps it was because today there were many close comrades here.

Similarly even Lux was feeling more comfortable with this kind of atmosphere, but the Triad who unexpectedly had bad drunken behavior was honestly troubling for him.

"I'll accept the requests that came until now until I graduate from the Academy. Now I have the leeway for that much after all."

"Now now, just how much do you like doing chores? We are happy with your feelings, but if you are being too kind, you will get taken advantage of you know?"

This time the drunk Sharis also hugged him from the chair at the opposite side.

Her usual rose scent was blown away by the smell of alcohol, but the texture of her breasts that were relatively big made him felt half troubled and half happy.

But, he returned to his senses from the reproachful gaze of Airi who was also similarly drunk.

"I think the two of them are a bit persistent, but please forgive them. They are feeling lonely. Because it feels like Lux-san is getting further away."

Noct whispered that with a small voice, but Lux didn't understand what she meant.

"Getting further.....I only had my criminal collar taken off, but we will still be together in Syvalles from now on too. Surely nothing will change."

"Haa....."

Airi who saw Lux's smile let out a loud sigh.

"It's just as I said right, Noct? Nii-san doesn't notice anything at all."

"Yes. I never thought that it will be this serious. A drastic measure will be necessary like this."

"Eerr, what are you talking about?"

When Lux tilted his head with a troubled look, Noct unusually hung down her head.

Then from behind, Aeryl showed her face suddenly.

"It's their last struggle you know, Lux-kun. The pact has ended, so at the very least they want to have time while they still can, that's how it is."

"Wai-, Aeryl!? Geez, don't bring up the heart of the matter so suddenly like that!"

"A punishment is needed for that kind of child. Then we will show you the sexual harassment combo of the Triad! Noct too, come!"

"No. The two of you are too drunk....."

Sharis and Tillfur hurriedly stood up and leaped at Aeril.

It also felt like there was no one who was giving them any warning, so their drunken act was getting worse and worse.

Noct ignored the command of Sharis who should be her lord and sat down beside Lux in exchange.

"Then, I'll also make my last struggle. I'm thinking to drink Lux-san down just like this, how about it?"

"I'm permitting it Noct. Now Nii-san, before the criminal collar is taken off, please pit out all of your indecent crimes until now in the Academy."

Noct was taciturn and calm like usual, but she was showing a somewhat mischievous smile, and Airi whose expression looked completely drunk.

They exchanged consecutive offenses of pouring sake with excellent calculation, and Airi who was picking up quarrel with him drank herself unconscious first. After Noct brought her towards her room, Lux secretly sneaked out from the party and headed towards the castle's terrace.

At that place where it was only a few hours ago that Syvalles received the commendations, the tapestry, red carpet, candlestick and all the other decorations had been removed. There was also not a single citizen remaining behind.

Regardless of that, a strange feeling of exaltation welled up just by standing there.

It had been five years since that day of revolution, and one year since he came to the Academy.

There were many encounters and battles that Lux himself had never imagined.

Lux who had settled the matter with Fugil was——

"Today is really like a dream. Even though I can still feel the heat of that battle in my body——"

A single girl was standing there. Celistia turned around and smiled.

Right after the party began, he told Celis beforehand that if there was a chance he wanted to talk with her.

"Yes. I also feel like I'm dreaming. To think that this kind of day would arrive——"

"Once more, congratulations. For everyone's safe return, and also for the freedom of you siblings after the achievements of you two were recognized."

"Thank you very much. I could come this far because of everyone's help. I can also finally see the path that I have been chasing after all this time since the day of the revolution——"

"You found, your answer?"

"Yes."

Lux nodded at Celis's question.

Then, the beautiful girl who was usually dignified and resolute was entangling her fingers in front of her chest looking flustered, or perhaps fretful.

"The, then, that's.....can I say just one thing? There is just one thing that I have to tell you no matter what today. Not as your senior in the Academy or even as a Seven Dragon Paladin's aide, but as me personally——"

"Before that, can I say something to senpai first?"

"Eh? Yes..... feel free."

Under the night sky that was inlaid with stardust.

Celis was caught off guard and looked bewildered. Lux stared straight towards her and took a deep breath.

The cold air of winter filled his lungs before the air was enveloped with flaring up heat inside him and exhaled out.

—

"——I love you, Celis-senpai."

—

Lux's voice echoed on the stage of the terrace that was bathed in moonlight. There wasn't any other sound. Inside the perfectly clear air, the flow of time was forgotten.

Most likely, if he didn't listen to her feelings on the first day of the parade, he wouldn't be able to realize his love towards Celis.

But, the fate of this time was allied with her and guided the event to this result.

"I finally noticed after the battle reached an end. I wish to fight at your side from here on too. I want you to be at my side. Can you give me your answer? It's fine even after listening to what Celis-senpai wanted to say just——"

".....Tha, that is, unfair."

Celis's eyes opened wide while her body stiffened completely. After some time passed, Celis's hands covered her mouth and she averted her gaze.

Her expression had an intoxicated look that he had never seen until now, as though she was inside a dream.

"Even though I was thinking that I have to take the lead as the senior, I'm the one who got told that. I won't be able to stand up again if you tell me it's a joke now."

"Then I'll say it one more time. I love you. Will you, become betrothed to me?"

Lux too looked slightly embarrassed while walking towards her and telling her so.

He intended to feign calmness as much as possible but, even just doing that was the best that he could do.

"——!?"

Celis's face was dyed bright red until her ears and steam was overflowing from her face.

When Lux had walked until where Celis was standing still as though she was turning into a statue, her body quickly moved.

"Ah.....!"

Lux raised his voice in surprise.

When he noticed, his body was pulled closer by her arms and he was strongly embraced.

Because Celis's body was tall, and then because Lux's body was pitching forward, his face ended up buried into her voluptuous breasts.

The sensation that was simultaneously soft and tight made him intoxicated with their scent that was like flowers.

Lux also circled his hands to her back and they shared their flushed body's heat.

"Tha, that's, can you not look up? Right now it's a bit, hard to look at your face."

"I want to see but, I'll endure. Also, if you hug too strongly, my breath——"

Frankly speaking, it was the breasts that were suffocating him, but he didn't say until that far.

".....That is, not permitted. If you told me something like that, I won't be able to let go of you that easily."

Celis whose cheeks were blushing kept averting her face while pouting her lips.

Because of her loveliness and the happiness he felt, Lux went along with her intimacy that couldn't let go of him. And then the two's bodies finally separated reluctantly.

"You don't even need to ask about my answer. To think that I will be able to hear those words from you, I've never even imagined it."

Celis's expression that looked like she was inside a dream looked excessively erotic.

It was to the degree that he was unable to suppress the feeling of wanting her at this place.

"Then, Celis-senpai is okay with it?"

"Obviously. Right now, I'm really happy. So much so that I'm thinking it will be better if this night will never end forever."

Celis matched her height with Lux, and then she held his hand with their fingers entangled together.

Unlike the passionate hug just now, there was a peaceful feeling of contentment in the two's expressions.

"But, please stop calling me senpai. It will help if you call my name without being conscious of that kind of hierarchical relationship."

"Is that so? Then——eerr, Celis?"

The instant Lux called her name awkwardly, *twitch-*, Celis's body jumped.

She waved around her hands with an extremely flustered expression that he had never seen until now.

"Wai-, as I thought that way of calling isn't permitted. N, no, I don't have problem at all with you calling me like that but, if you call me like that in the Academy, I don't know what will happen."

Seeing Celis acting suspiciously which she had never done before, it made Lux to slip out a chuckle unconsciously.

"Then, let's postpone it until Celis-senpai's graduation."

When Lux said that teasingly, Celis showed an embarrassed and sulky face.

"Geez, you are being mean Lux. But that's——when it's only the two of us, I'll permit you to call me like just now. I want you to call me like that."

"Right. I'll do that, Celis."

Lux said that and embraced her gently once more.

Celis hugged back and put strength into her arms. They shared that feeling with each other.

The two who were filled with the feeling of exaltation felt like they became one with the other. Before long their lips quietly pressed on the other.

Part 4

"Then, the next time we meet will be at the Academy. Tha, that, it's not permitted to cut loose so much in the Academy. It will go against the norm inside the Academy."

"I know that. I understand Celis-senpai's personality at least."

She was a girl with a sense of responsibility that was overly serious, that was why he knew that she wasn't wishing to act like lovers before public eyes.

If he could speak out his true feelings, he also felt that it was a bit of a shame, but Lux wasn't someone who couldn't control himself.

—That was how it was supposed to be, but.

"Bu, but, I'll permit it if it's in private. Also, if it's at times like when we are going out with just the two of us on holiday, I'll meet Lux's wish—no, it's nothing! Please forget it!"

"....."

Celis gasped and returned to her senses in the middle. She waved her hands in panic as though crossing them.

If he was told that kind of provocative thing, the current Lux would become unable to endure in various senses.

Lux promised that when things calmed down, he would go to the house of Ralgris to report about the betrothal before they returned to the party venue.

A long party in the castle was continuing until late at night.

Part 5

"Nn, uu....."

Late at night when people had completely fallen asleep, Lux felt some kind of presence and opened his eyes.

When he looked around the banquet hall, everyone who participated in the party at the castle had drunk themselves dead drunk.

Tick, tack....., the systematic sound of the clock's hand could be heard clearly.

Other than that there was only the painful silence that was enveloping the inside of the castle.

Celis who had mutually exchanged and affirmed feelings with him just now was sleeping face down on the table.

Airi, Lisha and the other members of Syvalles, and also the representatives from other countries were all similarly sleeping like a log.

It would be impolite to say this, but unexpectedly even that Yoruka was sleeping soundly.

Queen Raffi and Prime Minister Nulph, then the Four Great Nobles had retired early, so they weren't here but—

(What is this, this strange sensation)

This scene itself wasn't something that strange.

The long battle had ended along with the parade of conclusion.

Everyone was liberated from the feeling of tension that was pressuring them. It wasn't out of place at all for them to run out of strength and fell asleep at the end here.

If pushed to say, it was Lux who was the strange one.

His eyes were abnormally clear, his sleepiness was blown away by tension.

It was as though Lux's own body was sounding the alarm bell to notify his unaware mind of a danger.

(No way, right.....)

He tried to mutter an exasperated self-depreciating comment, but for some reason he couldn't make any voice.

He naturally confirmed the faces of the sleeping people and noticed something out of place.

(Aeril isn't here? Where did she go.....?)

There was no obligation to continue staying in this place, so it wouldn't be strange if she left because of some reason.

But, some kind of strange anxiety in his heart caused Lux to slip out of the banquet hall and walk inside the castle.

(Where am I going? What am I going to do?)

He had no idea where Aeril could have gone.

If she left from this place by her own will, it would be impossible to even find her.

And yet—

(This sensation, from somewhere..... Even five years ago, I.....)

There was no sound inside the castle other than the sound of the clock ticking.

He didn't find anything suspicious.

"Haa, just what am I doing....."

After going around inside the vast castle once and while going up to the second floor, Lux noticed his own eccentric behavior and let out a wry smile while he stopped walking.

The victory in the great war and the liberation from the status of a criminal.

Furthermore he proposed to Celis which she accepted. Perhaps all of those made him strangely driven by anxiety instead and he became strange.

To be unable to honestly feel happy like this, it was astonishing even if he said so himself.

".....-!"

A chilly breeze suddenly blew through him. Lux's body shivered.

He should return quickly to the banquet hall of the party and warm his body with the fire at the hearth.

After that he would look at everyone's sleeping face and wait quietly for dawn to come while also serving as a lookout.

Thinking that, he turned on his heels and walked through the corridor inside the castle once more, but then a faint prickling pain stabbed his head.

Then abnormality was conveyed to Lux not through his eyes or ears, but through his nose.

He couldn't say that he was used to smell this, but with his position he had experienced this smell several times.

The smelly iron's—smell of blood was rising up from the courtyard's atrium.

Lux immediately looked down from the second floor's courtyard to the courtyard at the first floor. There, a collapsed person and an angel type Abyss that was looking down on the person stood out in the darkness.

—

"—Eh!?"

—

Lux immediately pressed his mouth and swallowed back the scream that almost flew out from his mouth.

A great amount of blood was flowing from the collapsed person—that person was dead.

There wasn't anyone in the courtyard when he was strolling just now.

And yet, this scene suddenly appeared. That fact shocked him

He rubbed his eyes thinking if it was an illusion, but far from vanishing, he could see even more different existences.

"—Target's elimination complete activating alteration of history's divergence point starting erasure of reality at present time."

It was a monotonous voice that was said rapidly without punctuation.

A peculiar outfit that looked really similar to a pilot suit.

The one who was clad in a suit that was tightly fitting on the body was a petite girl with cold expression.

But, a trait that was even more striking than those was growing on the girl's head.

The mechanical bird feathers that were growing out from around the ears.

Lux's memory was remembering the existence that possessed such trait which displayed their inhuman nature.

"You are—El Fajura!?"

The Gear Leader who once controlled the Ruin Gigas and attacked the New Kingdom along with Hayes.

After it was destroyed by Yoruka and stopped functioning, its whereabouts became unknown but—

"..... Encountering hostile existence, asking permission to eliminate.....denied roger."

The Automaton who noticed the voice looked up at Lux from the courtyard.

She tilted her head diagonally and glanced at Lux, then she showed a slight smile and muttered something.

There was no mistake.

"Why!? Why are you here!? No, more importantly that man is——"

A man around thirty years old wearing a tailcoat suit under his mantel.

Right beside him, Lux could see the Sword Device of a Drake falling out from its sword belt.

Lux's heart leaped strongly inside his chest despite not knowing the man's face.

(Who is this man? I've never seen him before but, don't tell me——)

"Starting fate's course correction, the manager orders to ignore object that is not a target and continue, consenting."

El Fajura's robotic and monotonous voice struck Lux's eardrums.

Right after that, seven colored light shined at the castle's courtyard and Lux's field of vision was faintly melting.

(What in the world is this..... Am I dreaming!?)

Just before Lux's lost consciousness, a man wearing an ultramarine robe that was called an armor suit showed his face.

Singlen Shelbrit.

Lux burned the figure of that man who was called the Blue Tyrant into his eyes and he lost consciousness.

Episode 5 – Artifact(Transforming Drag-Ride) 《Ouroboros》

Part 1

The sound of fireworks could be heard from early in the morning at the Royal Capital's castle town.

On the first day of the parade that celebrated the New Year, the royal family showed their faces from a horse carriage along with the soldiers' march.

Naturally Lux also escorted Lisha. It was decided that they would act together throughout the morning.

"Haaa, I'm tireed....."

After finishing the greeting to the people from the horse carriage that took a total of four hours and returning to the inn, Lux took off his coat and threw his body on the bed.

Inside the room, there was Airi who had also accompanied him during the marching parade, and Philuffy, who was riding behind them as a guard. In addition, even the Triad came to play.

"That's really slovenly, Nii-san. It's really astonishing that the hero who saved the world is acting like this."

Airi was also showing a slightly worn-out expression, and yet her back was still firmly straight while she was sitting on the sofa together with Noct.

"As expected, even Lux-kun looks beaten up. Though the mental fatigue seems to be more serious."

"Ain't that riight. It's rare to see Lux-chi that tired after doing his usual chores."

After Sharis concluded straightforwardly, Tillfur also poked fun at Lux in amusement.

"Yes. It can't be helped. After all, this kind of diplomatic exchange is Airi's field in the first place."

"It's a daily trouble for me to settle down the various commotions that Nii-san causes in the Academy you know?"

After spending a relaxing time with the Triad, Airi, and Philuffy, a party with only the students of the Academy began in a large bar that Relie reserved exclusively for them.

There they extolled the victory where they wrested back the peace and shared their happiness with each other that everyone managed to return safe and sound.

Lux was surrounded by the girls due to the matter of the chore requests for him that were piling up and their wish to talk with him about his heroic tale at Avalon, but each time that happened the Triad and Airi skillfully managed the crowd. He was thankful to them for that.

"Come to think of it, I was worried during the parade. It looked like Yoruka-san was searching the surroundings frequently with Yato no Kami

though——"

When dusk arrived, several people headed back to their rooms in the inn and the number of students surrounding Lux finally began to decrease.

Then, Noct who was secretly approaching him whispered into his ear with a serious expression.

"Yes. It looked like she discovered some Drag-Knights who were acting suspicious. She wishes to talk with Lux-san regarding that——"

"Got it. I'll go to the toilet for a bit and then talk to her after that."

This was a course of events that didn't happen previously. Now that he thought about it, he felt like Yoruka was also telling him that there was something nearby.

No, if he remembered correctly it was a discussion that took place after this.

According to Yoruka, there was the presence of someone approaching, so she left to check it out——

—

(.....? The presence of someone approaching? After this? Just what am I thinking?)

—

Was his mind in chaos after he was liberated from the tension of the New Years parade that finally arrived?

"That's fine but, please don't let Yoruka-san do anything to Lux-san in the toilet..... We are in the Royal Capital after all!"

"No way, it's impossible that anything like that would happen", was something that Lux couldn't declare. He smiled wryly at that. Lux relieved himself in the toilet and washed his hands, then he headed out of the bar.

After walking for a bit, he arrived at an empty back alley. There he called Yoruka's name.

"Yoruka, you there?"

"Of course. I am always at Aruji-sama's side."

The familiar eastern country's black outfit smoothly appeared from the shadows. Yoruka then bowed reverently.

As soon as the beautiful girl who was called the Empire's Assassin Blade appeared in front of Lux, her face burst into a bright smile instantly.

"Yoruka too, it would be better if you participated in the party. You are a real help for guarding our surroundings like this but, at least——"

"That consideration is enough for me, Aruji-sama."

The noble of the Old Empire faction called Waybra who raised the banner of revolt towards the New Kingdom.

If Celis's father, Dist, didn't tell him about the existence of such a suspicious man, it wouldn't even be necessary to be this vigilant.

But fortunately that threat had already passed.

(.....? The threat of Waybra has passed? Why am I thinking like that? Even though both Yoruka and me haven't even seen that man's appearance——)

Lux was concentrating his awareness towards the girl before him even while thinking of such question.

First he gave words of thanks to Yoruka who had been guarding him and the others all this time from the shadows.

"I'm really thankful. I'll compensate it to you for sure when this parade is over. No. If it doesn't look like there will be any problem, then even now you can join the party——"

.....*snap-!*

"——!?"

There was the snapping sound of someone stepping on a branch.

It was a faint sound that was mixed among the sounds of people coming and going from a distance, but Lux and Yoruka reacted immediately.

They stayed hiding under the building's shadow while their hands were on the handles of their Sword Devices. They held their breath while searching for the nearby presence.

"Yoruka? Just now, could it be——"

"Yes, it's obviously not the presence of an ally. But——it's strange."

"Strange?"

Yoruka tilted her head while muttering with a serious face. Lux's face turned perplexed in response.

Then, without even replying back Yoruka started to walk as though she was weaving her way through the back alley.

She could only do that because it was impossible to summon Yato no Kami at the complicated and narrow path.

Lux who was concerned also followed behind her.

Then, she told him the answer with a small voice that was like an insect's chirp.

"The person noticed our alertness and withdrew—it doesn't look like that's the case. The person here came to observe Aruji-sama before getting called by someone and returned. It's something like that I think."

".....What do you mean?"

It felt like the mystery was deepening further, but it seemed even Yoruka didn't know the full details of what transpired here.

While Lux was pondering, she passed through the alley with a smooth motion.

And then, when she arrived at another alley with a dead-end, Yoruka stood still alone at that place.

".....No one, is there?"

"It seems so."

Yoruka was staring at the empty alley while not making the slightest movement.

Seeing how her right hand kept hanging over her Sword Device, surely she was thinking that this situation was unnatural.

Her purple eye that received Baptism was tinged with glaring light. It was obvious that she was focusing all her concentration.

Furthermore she drew out her Sword Device and summoned Yato no Kami and used the radar of a special equipment type to start searching the surroundings.

"Yoruka!?"

"Aruji-sama, please stay behind me."

For the time being Lux took cover just as Yoruka instructed, but after more than ten seconds—it seemed Yoruka didn't find anything in the end. She gave up and dispelled her armor.

"I searched every nook and cranny from the sky until the underground, but I am unable to find the actual enemy. My deepest apologies. Please grant me any punishment that Aruji-sama deems fit."

"No, there is no need for that. Just, can you tell me what happened?"

Yoruka's expression seemed somewhat disappointed when she heard that there would be no punishment from Lux. Lux smiled wryly at that while asking her once more.

Then, perhaps Yoruka herself didn't have a full grasp of what happened, because she was reporting to him with an unusually perplexed expression.

"Speaking from the result, it was just my imagination. The man who seemed to be a spy probing into us suddenly cut out of contact here. Even Yato no Kami's radar didn't catch anything."

"That is, certainly strange."

Lux too believed that there was no way it was just their misunderstanding from the sound that they picked up just now.

It was also unthinkable that Yoruka, who excelled in her detection ability, would make such an elementary blunder.

In fact, someone was actually showing movement to spy on Lux and the others, but after that the person suddenly vanished.

When he put it into words like that it became even more confusing, but in reality that seemed to be what actually happened.

".....Eh? How did you know that the person just now was a man? If I remember right we didn't catch sight of his appearance——"

"That much can be known from the pace of his steps and the loudness of the sound when stepping on the stone road. If I have to say further, I can also somehow grasp which direction he would try to run."

As expected from an assassin with an innate disposition of reading the opponent's breathing.

Lux was feeling astonishment at her prodigious talent once more while asking where the man was heading.

Then Yoruka sheathed her Sword Device and instantly answered with a graceful expression.

"Most likely towards the castle. Though there is still a lot of distance from here to there."

"....."

Someone who came from the castle was trying to probe Lux.

Was he an underling of an influential person who was trying to put Lux under their banner just like Celis's father Dist said?

The possibility of that wasn't zero, but if that were the case then it was curious as to the reason why that person would turn back at the middle.

Was it a mere coincidence, or did something unexpected happen?

But, surely the answer wouldn't come out just from making assumptions like this when it was a situation where even Yoruka couldn't trace the footprints of the spy.

He could only keep this incomprehensible event in mind while going through the parade carefully.

".....I will watch the surroundings just in case. Aruji-sama, please return to the party."

Yoruka prompted him like that with a carefree smile.

If it was the usual Lux, he might presume upon Yoruka's goodwill and follow her words.

However, right now, for some reason, he felt that her tone sounded somewhat lonely.

"Say, Yoruka. Do you want to look around the parade with me for a bit? It's not bright at this time, so I think I won't stand out that much."

".....Is that alright?"

After a bit of pause, Yoruka's eyes widened in astonishment.

Lux spontaneously slipped out a smile at her novel behavior that was like a normal girl.

"Is that no good? I just want to try going around together with Yoruka."

"Then, please allow me to accompany you. After all, if I'm at Aruji-sama's side, I feel like I'll be able to enjoy it."

Lux's chest thumped hard seeing the graceful smile she showed him.

Usually Yoruka would be excessive with her skinship towards him in various ways, but exactly because of that, when she showed him her natural smile like this all of a sudden, she looked terribly lovely to him.

Whether it was her beautifully radiant black hair, and her glossy pink lips.

Her white nape and breast that peeked out from her provocative black outfit were also so bewitching that he would unconsciously gulp.

"Yoruka, is there anything that you want to eat? I'll treat you if you don't have any money."

"It will be good if Aruji-sama will allow me to choose only from the food that you will partake of."

She replied like that, so without any other choice Lux bought meat skewers and baked sweets that looked good at the food stalls.

Then, Yoruka lifted up her face like a chick that was pleading to be fed. She thrust out her well-shaped lips.

"Please, allow me to test if there is any poison. Can I receive just a bite?"

"Eh, ah..... Right."

Her pair of eyes was silently looking down. Her usual bewitching allure was lowered down considerably, but in exchange now she looked like a pure innocent young girl with a lovely appearance that made him watch her in fascination.

It became a strange course of events somehow, but this action was really like Yoruka.

He never thought that her asking for only a part of his food would have this kind of meaning.

(More importantly, could it be that this situation.....)

From Yoruka's point of view, this was an act that wasn't that strange. But Lux noticed that seen from the side, this was completely like a conversation

between fellow lovers. He got embarrassed from that.

—But, he couldn't go back from here.

(Wait, thinking carefully, isn't it difficult to feed someone with meat skewer!? It will be troubling if the skewer stabs, but—)

After worrying for a few seconds, Lux used his thumb and index finger to take off a piece of meat and brought it directly to Yoruka's mouth.

When his fingertips felt the elasticity of her soft lips, a bittersweet ache welled up inside him.

But, Yoruka didn't look bothered at all and put the meat inside her mouth and began to chew.

It seemed she didn't sense any poison because before long she swallowed the meat with a gulp.

"So, how is it—uwa"

"There is no poison in it. More importantly Aruji-sama, your finger will be burned if you grab the food with your bare hands."

Yoruka brought her lips closer to Lux's finger that was smeared with meat juice as though to cool it down using her saliva.

Like that she entangled her tongue around his finger and sucked until the second joint. Before long she slowly pulled her face back.

The soft sensation of the lips that were holding his finger.

The stickiness of saliva that was warmly enveloping his finger.

And then the smooth tongue stimulated his sense of touch, paralyzing his brain with strange pleasure.

The mere act of simply making her to taste for poison made him feel like his soul was going to slip out of his body.

"Then Aruji-sama. Can you allow me to test the baked sweets too? Or perhaps, just to make sure, I should ascertain the meat skewer once more—"

"E-, err..... Then one more ti—not that! As I thought, please try only the cheese cake!"

Lux rallied his reasoning that was almost melting and somehow endured through the temptation.

"Is that so? That's unfortunate."

Yoruka muttered while looking somewhat disappointed. This time Lux presented her with a cheese cake.

Her lips nibbled at the tip of the yellow cake that had the shape of a triangle.

After chewing once more she swallowed, and then she replied to Lux while making a small nod.

"There is no problem. Please eat up without any worry."

Yoruka's face flashed a bright smile. Lux nodded while feeling excited.

He noticed when eating the cake that it was an indirect kiss, but he ate it without getting too bothered about it.

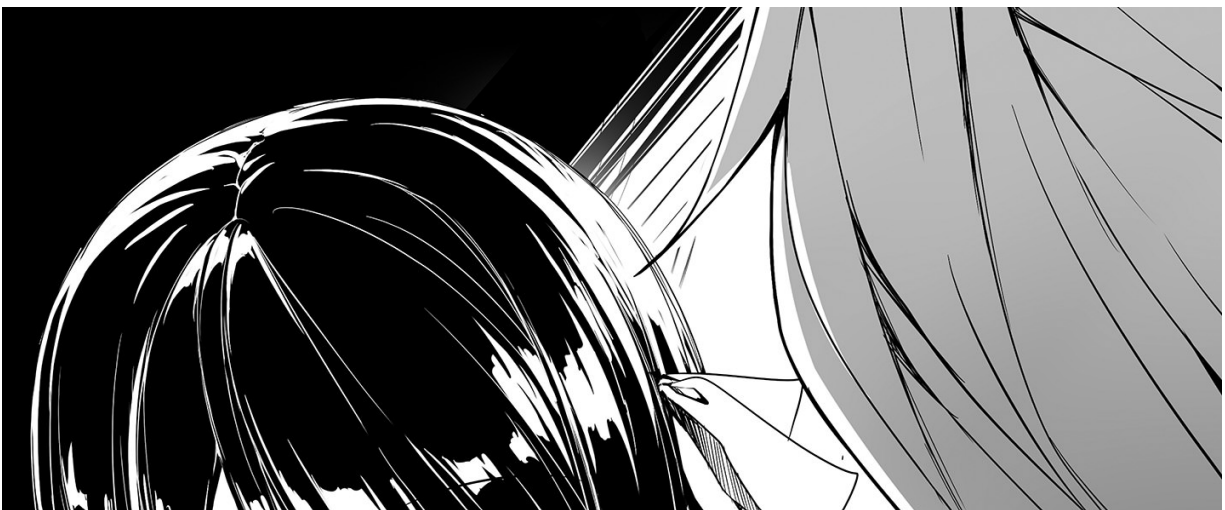
"Yep, it's tasty. Thank you Yoruka."

"There is no need to be considerate of me. I'm grateful to Aruji-sama for just spending your time with me like this."

Yoruka smiled at Lux with her cheeks reddening looking somewhat intoxicated.

Her rare human gesture looked pretty under the Royal Capital's lighting.

"That's because I was lonely that I was unable to meet Yoruka until now. I know it was in order to protect me but, in that two weeks, it should have been alright if you showed yourself to me at least once——"





He knew that Airi and the Triad were making a bet whether Lux would notice or not, but it should be fine even if she wasn't that stiff.

""

When Lux said so while thinking that, Yoruka paused for a bit and before long she resolved herself and replied back.

"Actually about that case, I wished for it to be like that myself. Though it became exposed that they were keeping the secret for me."

"Eh.....?"

Lux spontaneously stopped walking at Yoruka's unexpected confession.

It was just the right timing when the flow of people at the surrounding was cut off. Countless street lights could be seen from above the overpass.

Lux's eyes were stolen by Yoruka's side profile amidst that fantastical scenery.

Her face had a somewhat lonely looking smile that he remembered seeing before in the middle of these three days of the parade.

"If I was alone with only Aruji-sama at that time, I wouldn't be able to suppress my feelings. That was why, I held back by only protecting Aruji-sama from a distance."

"....."

The confession from the girl who claimed that she was just a tool.

Lux was completely dumbfounded at her asymmetrically colored eyes' gaze that was tinged with faint sorrow.

After her battle against Singlen, Yoruka who didn't possess emotions was harboring a certain special emotion, which she directed only towards her master, Lux.

She said that she might be in love with Lux.

She said that to him.

"But, it's a mistake for me who doesn't know the way for a human to love, to dream of being able to receive Aruji-sama's affection. And yet, for me to feel this much enjoyment just from getting invited by Aruji-sama like this——"

"——"

Was it, sympathy?

When he was looking at Yoruka, an emotion that was different from the impulse just now was making Lux's body feel hot.

(No, wrong. I am, towards Yoruka.....)

All this time he was thinking that she was a human.

Certainly she possessed outstanding talent and a special working of the heart, but because of that she was feared and avoided by her surroundings.

—

[.....I'm astonished. Something like that—to choose the path of destroying one's own country by one's own hands in order to save it. This is my terrible misunderstanding. Aruji-sama, from the start you are fighting all this time for the sake of the Arcadia Empire, aren't you? In order to make it come true, the ideal country that you dreamed of—]

—

It was just like those words Yoruka said once in the past.

Lux was considered as an enemy by the populace, even so as a prince of the Arcadia Empire, he tried all possible means in order to accomplish his mission.

Yoruka was accepting that she was a defective good. Even so she was trying to repay her little brother's feelings.

Lux wanted to save Yoruka not because he wanted recompense for his past where he was unable to save the imperial family of the Old Empire or anything like that, but because it was something that he personally wanted to do.

Her purity that was simply earnest, which no one was able to notice with just a glance.

Right now, Lux noticed that all this time he had been charmed by the beauty of that purity.

"I'm disqualified as a servant."

"—It's fine. It doesn't matter even if you are disqualified."

The self-depreciating statement that Yoruka spoke out was cut off by Lux's reply.

Those words didn't come from him thinking in response. When he noticed, his mouth already said that, as though those words directly came from his spinal cord.

".....Aruji, sama?"

Lux's face was reflected on Yoruka's eyes.

A smile was reflected there. A smile so gentle that it shocked even Lux.

"I don't think that you are disqualified or anything, and even if that's actually the case, I want Yoruka to stay at my side as a human. No matter what anyone says, no matter in what kind of form it will be, it's fine if you are by my side."

Staking everything on one's own feelings and persisting in carrying that out through thick and thin.

The way Lux's heart worked was similar with Yoruka's.

However, his feelings towards her wasn't anything like sympathy.

He was in love with the beauty of this girl who was even purer than himself.

That was why—he wished that she would stay by his side.

Because Lux thought that he himself would be able to become strong with her at his side.

"Aruji-sama, you said something similar to my little brother again——"

With a soft footstep, Yoruka walked towards him with a movement that didn't make any sound.

Without even any time to react, Lux's lips were stolen in a flash.

".....-!"

The kiss from the younger girl was sweet. The gentle scent from her hair tickled his nose.

He was drunk in a pleasantness that didn't come from just a single spot of his body. It was as though even their hearts were connected.

They stayed still like that for more than ten seconds, where the hearts of the two were connected to each other.

When Yoruka's lips finally let go, her cheeks were dyed red and she was staring at him with a gaze that was melting in passion.

".....I don't mind whether I'll only be second or third, as long as I can stay by the side of my beloved Aruji-sama. But——"

Yoruka paused for a moment, then she let out a chuckle and turned her back towards him.

"It will be great if Aruji-sama can find your first, or even your second and more. If possible we can test it here——"

"Hey, wait a second-!? This place is right in the middle of the capital you know!?"

Yoruka was saying that while she was going to flip up her white skirt. Lux returned to his senses seeing that and stopped her.

"My, we cannot? Holding back isn't good for the body, Aruji-sama."

This time it was Lux who turned red at the whisper of Yoruka who was seeing through him.

Lux hurriedly pinched his own cheek so he wouldn't be washed away by his instinct that was starting to want this lovely servant.

"I, it's not like that. It's no good doing that in this kind of place! That's why——"

"Understood. Then Aruji-sama, please call me when it's a good time. I'll be waiting anytime."

Lux lost his words hearing the reply that she said with her usual carefree smile.

If his criminal collar was taken off after the parade and Yoruka became his girlfriend, it was plain to see that it would be disaster if he didn't control himself in various things, but——

(Honestly, I'm not really confident that I'll be able to endure.....!)

Even while he was worrying with a complicated feeling, Lux gently held Yoruka's hand and they returned together towards the bar.

"——!?"

Amidst their way back through the festival that was filled with happiness and excitement, Lux felt a prickling pain in his chest.

He had betrayed someone while not noticing it.

Even though Lux didn't even understand what it was about, he was caught by such misapprehension.

It was strange.

Even though Yoruka should be the first girl who he wanted to be lovers with——

"Aruji-sama, is something the matter?"

Yoruka seemed to guess the inside of Lux's heart from his atmosphere. She was peering into his face.

".....It's nothing. Now, let's go back."

Lux shook his head slightly and looked forward with a wry smile.

When he returned to the party together with Yoruka, the Triad and Airi made fun of him.

Like that, the long night was growing late full of liveliness.

—

.....

In the end, where did the person who tried to approach Lux and Yoruka vanish to?

He wondered who sent that spy who came from the castle.

Sometimes he would be thinking about that, but he couldn't find the answer until the very end.

The first day of the parade finally reached the end.

Part 2

The second day of the New Years parade, at noon.

The band of the New Kingdom was welcoming the visitors' coaches at the castle gate.

The invitees were the state guests from seven countries.

The victory banquet of the sworn friends who cooperated with each other as the world alliance and saved the world would be held from noon.

Of course, they weren't called here just for the celebration.

It would also be a meeting to confirm that the existence of Aeryl who became the center of Avalon was neutral. And it would also be a place to casually compare and adjust the direction of their plan from here on.

But, that would be the job of Queen Raffi and Prime Minister Nulph.

Lux was a Seven Dragon Paladin to the end, as a key figure who was contributing to the victory, many people requested to meet him.

In other words, Lux had to respectfully greet and thank the noble guests just like how he always was.

"—It has been a long time, your highness, Princess Milmiette."

The representative of the Vanheim Principality, the princess Milmiette who was wearing a light green dress greeted Lux with a smile.

He once had met her at the Drag-Knight's Class promotion exam, so they knew each other's faces.

"Long time no see, Lux-dono. I was really in your debt for looking after the negligent and careless Greifer at that time."

Her graceful smile that was like a flower looked more like a town girl rather than a noble, but that amiable atmosphere felt more comfortable for Lux instead.

"No, there wasn't anything like that. He is certainly always behaving sulkily, but in reality he is really serious and really takes good care of others—perhaps he is just shy, don't you think so?"

".....That's what he said, Greifer. Isn't that great? It looks like you won't need to get scolded by me later."

"—Wait, EEEEEH!?"

Right after Milmiette smiled, a blond haired young man who had a displeased expression appeared from inside the same coach.

Lux spoke honestly because he couldn't see Greifer's figure, and yet it was a trap that was set against him.

"Looks like we gotta talk for a bit with just the two of us huh, New Kingdom's knight-sama. I'm also relieved that you look really energetic yeah."

"No, err, that....."

After showing an angry smile at the pale and bewildered Lux, Greifer headed into the castle first.

Milmiette who saw that bowed her head smilingly in front of Lux.

"Forgive him. Even though he looks like that, he isn't actually angry, so if possible please keep him company at the banquet too. He is going to be alone acting cold there anyway."

"Ahaha....."

That scene easily surfaced in Lux's imagination and he smiled wryly.

He thought that he might have done something that he shouldn't do, but it seemed that it was just Milmiette's consideration in her own way.

After seeing off the coach going through the castle gate, he heard the footsteps of a girl who had already come down from the next coach.

"In the end he is just a child. What a troubling man, to be needing the princess to follow up for him like that."

"—Ah."

It was a tone that sounded noble and also confident.

The high pitched voice that still had a trace of childishness in it made Lux turn around.

There he found a girl with platinum hair wearing a chic black dress along with a cape above it.

The representative of the Ymir Theocracy. The youngest Seven Dragon Paladin, Mel Gizalut was standing before him. She was looking up at Lux who wasn't that tall.

"It has been a while, Onii-chan. It's great that you look healthy."

"Thanks to you. Mel, too, is also looking alright. I'm relieved."

Lux also replied back with a smile at the adorable girl's consideration.

She was a young girl with her thirteen years old age, but she possessed outstanding sense as a Drag-Knight. She used her small body to the very limit and fought through powerful enemies even at Avalon.

Her relationship with Krulcifer became on good terms through the incident at the Ymir Theocracy, and Krulcifer became her aide. Right now it was clear that the two of them had a good relationship as friends.

"Calling him Onii-chan like that, I wonder which one of us is the childish one..... Though I was a bit lost whether to make a retort or not."

"Ah, Krulcifer-san——"

Lux turned around to the girl who got down from the coach next. But his breath got caught in his throat with a gasp.

A girl with a deep blue dress and blue hair that had a flower decoration attached on.

The figure of his classmate that was beautiful like a fairy caused Lux to reflexively watch her in fascination.

"What's the matter Lux-kun? Could it be that you forgot my face at this reunion after so long?"

The girl's hand slowly caressed the chest of the stiffened Lux.

When his chest was traced by her hand through the dress suit, an incomprehensible sensation ran through his back and his body shivered.

After watching Lux's state in enjoyment, Krulcifer closed the distance between them.

Her dress that was opened at the chest area entered his line of sight. His gaze was completely guided towards there.

"I think that my injury has healed, but I wonder if there was any mark left behind. I'm worried, so can you check it for me?"

"Err, that—I think it's fine. Your skin looks beautiful."

Lux averted his gaze in panic and said that. Krulcifer made a mischievous looking flirtatious gaze and whispered.

"Is that so? Thank you. Lux-kun is gentlemanly towards a girl, but you are relatively thorough when staring. I can feel relieved if Lux-kun who is like that is telling me so. After all you are paying me so much attention like this."

"Wai-, Krulcifer-san!?"

When Lux objected with reddened cheeks, she chuckled in delight.

"I'm joking. I'm so happy to be able to meet Lux-kun after so long that it unconsciously made me want to tease you. Forgive me."

"....."

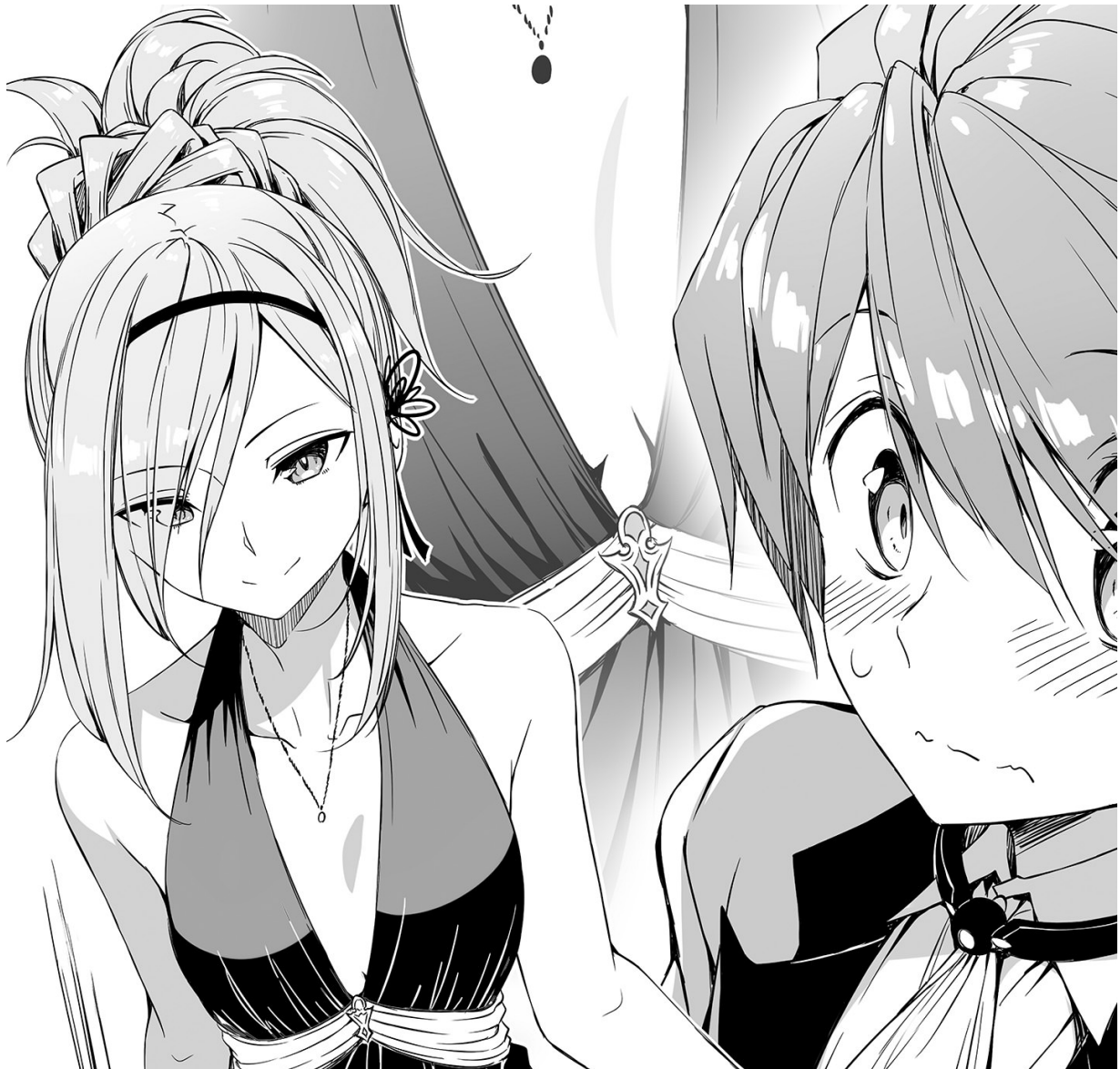
Lux too could only nod with a troubled look after she said it like that.

After so long—or rather, with Krulcifer's wiles that was getting increasingly polished, Lux could do nothing except getting toyed.

It was also the sad nature of man for him to also feel comfort from such thing.

"It doesn't look like there is anything to worry about if you can do this much in front of the castle gate. Good grief, just who is the child here."

"Oi, both of you! How long you are planning to make me wait!? Everyone is just a child like this! How unbecoming!"





The pope of Ymir Theocracy who was still young, Nias got tired of waiting and his face popped out from the coach.

It seemed that because Mel and Krulcifer ran ahead, he missed his chance to make his greeting.

Lux hurriedly faced him and apologized for his impoliteness, then they were waiting inside the castle until the next noble visitor arrived.

Lux and the others went around to greet the sovereigns and their staffs while amusing themselves with reminiscent talk with their comrades in arms.

Part 3

A peaceful time passed from noon until the evening. The night arrived before long.

In the middle, the members of Syvalles, Lisha and the others, also gathered, furthermore the entire Seven Dragon Paladins including Magialca and Singlen also participated.

It seemed the state guests who were the members of the world alliance held a meeting in the middle, but it ended without any particular problem.

After that a party was held inside the castle, and they enjoyed luxurious cooking with relish.

"Lux, spend a bit of time with me. Re Plica isn't here so I'm quite free."

Soffice was greedily devouring the dishes in her own pace while coming to his side.

At his opposite side, the drunk Rosa also came closer.

"Lux-samaa. If you also have some kind of order for me, please allow me to attend to you during my stay here no matter what....."

"Wai-m that's, your breast is touching. Don't entwine your arms that much....."

"You are happy even while saying that right? Trying to sexually harass a Seven Dragon Paladin in a public setting like this, are you planning to develop an international problem?"

Magialca who was watching that from in front of him teased him with an indecent grin.

Greifer was staring at that with an exasperated face, while beside him Aeril was laughing.

Mel, who couldn't drink alcohol because of her age, seemed to be in a difficulty because a large pile of food was heaped up in front of her by Philuffy's kindness.

Thinking back now, it was really a miracle that everyone could come back without any serious injuries.

Even though they also fought that man after defeating the Lord faction.

"....."

'Come to think of it', when he was recalling that, he caught sight of Singlen's figure at the corner of the party.

Perhaps because he lost his confidant Zweigbergk, he was placing a beautiful woman wearing glasses who seemed to be the third in rank within the White Ridge knight order as a replacement. He was drinking wine silently.

Singlen got into a duel with Lux because of their difference in objectives, but he wondered if he should be happy that Singlen safely survived.

He was a bit anxious wondering if Singlen was doing various kinds of intrigue behind the scenes of the negotiations regarding the legacies and technologies of Avalon in the future.

"Kukuku, that guy also looks lonely huh. Yosh, this is the captain's order. Pour him wine if his glass becomes empty. It will be for the celebration of his exaggerated ambition falling apart."

"....."

Magialca's lips curved and she instigated Lux.

Her relationship with Singlen wasn't good in the first place, but really, what a bad personality.

In fact, Lux had obstructed and ended Singlen's objective, so it would be provocative if Lux went to pour him wine.

But, this was that Singlen who always acted haughty and arrogant that they were talking about, so perhaps he would only scoff at him.

Perhaps it would be fine if he talked with him briefly at least to thank him for all his help until now.

Thinking that, Lux waited for the right timing before heading towards Singlen with a wine bottle in his hand.

When Lux approached until a certain distance, Singlen narrowed his single eye and looked up.

"That's an admirable spirit to do chores even at a party. Not giving me even a single greeting until now, you have been acting importantly huh, hero-dono."

"You only arrived to this party just now. It shouldn't be that long already....."

Lux replied with an exasperated face, however Singlen laughed him down without any change in his attitude.

"I'm talking about the previous party, you fool. It's laughable that you didn't even notice my existence until you got told by that upstart female fox."

"——?"

He wondered what Singlen meant by 'previous party'.

If he remembered correctly, the last party that he attended together with Singlen should be the one in the fortress at the abandoned capital Guernica.

"—But, I guess it's only natural. You are accepting this future that you are wishing yourself. You won't be able to easily escape just because of a little out of place feeling, with you under the influence of XXXXX's Divine Raiment."

".....Ha?"

Lux was unable to hear only a part of Singlen's talk.

It wasn't a problem with his tone or volume, his brain wasn't registering the words even though he could hear it.

Lux was captured by such incomprehensible feeling.

"If it's you who had received Baptism several times, sooner, or rather, you will surely reach it. Even so, it will be a different matter whether you will be able to face it or not. The seven Ruins.....before all the Artifacts(Transforming Weapons) completely resonate with each other, you first have to escape from this cage."

"....."

He couldn't understand what Singlen was talking about.

But, for some reason his words caught his attention. He couldn't just ignore it.

(Err—what should I do again?)

In the middle of the party, Lux suddenly noticed the weight in his hand.

A red wine bottle. He came here to pour wine for Singlen.

"Quickly pour it, chore boy. That's your job."

"Haa, I understand."

Lux let out a sigh while pouring the wine just as he was told.

But, the poured wine slipped through the glass Singlen was holding and trickled down directly onto the floor.

"—! Wha, what are you doing-!?"

"Eh.....?"

The spectacled beauty who was sitting nearby yelled in surprise.

When Lux tilted his head without understanding just what was going on, Singlen's figure had vanished without him noticing.

"—!?"

It wasn't that Singlen had gone somewhere, it was as though he wasn't there from the beginning. There was only the floor there.

"My goodness, looks like you are really drunk huh, hero-dono. Should Relie and I nurse you? Hmm?"

"Lu-chan. It's no good, if you drink too much."

When Magialca stood up looking like she was going to make trouble, Philuffy stopped her.

Lux was staring still at the floor where the wine spilled out while the master-student confrontation was happening at the side.

(What, is this. Something.....is strange.)

"Lux. There is only good wine provided here! I'll have you compensate for the wine that you made the floor drink. If you don't want that, then come pour wine for me too!"

"Can I also ask you to do that, Lux-kun? If I don't request you before your collar gets formally taken off—"

Lisha who was looking drunk called out to Lux. Krulcifer also continued after her.

However, the wedge of doubt that was driven into Lux's chest wouldn't come off.

"Where did Sir Singlen go?"

When Lux addressed the woman from the White Ridge knight order, she pushed the bridge of her glasses up with one hand while looking up at Lux's face with suspicion.

"Even if you ask me that, in the first place master isn't coming to this party though."

"What did you say.....?"

"Just like I said, master has a trifling matter to take care of so he isn't participating."

"Kukuku, that guy. He is running away because he is scared of me needling him."

"That's not it! I won't forgive any insult to leader!"

When Magialca made fun of Singlen with a mean smile, the spectacled woman objected back.

The spark of argument burst out. At the side, Lux was feeling confusion as though his head was punched.

—Contradiction.

Why was Magialca accepting the explanation from the woman just now?

Even though Lux was pouring sake for Singlen because of her instruction in the first place.....

"Captain Magialca, what you said just now——"

When Lux raised his face quickly and called Magialca's name, Magialca's figure also vanished from the party.

"Phi-chan. Where is Captain Magialca!?"

She should be in a quarrel with the woman from the White Ridge Knight Order just several seconds ago, but now he couldn't catch sight of her shadow.

When Lux talked to Philuffy beside him in panic, she lightly tilted her childish face and stated with surety.

"If it's master, she went somewhere just now. She said something like picking up the young men of the capital."

"....."

Philuffy didn't seem to understand the meaning of the words that she said. Lux directed a conflicted gaze towards her, however he was convinced.

"I see. Both of them aren't here in the first place aren't they? Because those two——at that time"

—A pool of blood.

The redness of the spilled wine that was spreading on the floor became a seed that made him recall a certain happening.

The figure of someone lying down on the ground with blood flowing was——

"Uh, gu.....!"

A high fever ran through Lux's body vertically and he got dizzy.

Celis quickly supported him when he was unconsciously staggering.

"Are you alright Lux!? If you are feeling bad, I'll carry you to the doctor——"

".....I'm alright, Celis-senpai. I'm not used to drink too much, so if I can vomit it a bit....."

"I'll accompany you, Lux-kun. Don't force yourself."

Aeril who came from somewhere lent Lux her shoulder.

He left the party following her suggestion.

Part 4

"How are you feeling now, Lux-kun?"

"I'm fine. I'm feeling comfortable now. It might be fine even if I don't vomit....."

In the corridor on the second floor of the castle. Lux was feeling the wind at a place where he could see the atrium courtyard while smiling powerlessly.

For some reason his sight was attracted towards a spot in the courtyard, but he couldn't find anything strange there.

There was something there at the previous tomorrow on the last day of the parade though.

The mechanical puppet with the appearance of a girl and a man in a tailcoat suit who was murdered by it.

"Uh.....!"

Lux was assaulted by a strong dizziness and he staggered.

Then Aeril nestled close to him and kindly caressed his back.

"Don't force yourself. I'm right at your side."

Lux felt relieve from the sweet scent of her body and her pleasant skin's warmth.

Aeril who was wearing a light green dress was ephemerally beautiful. The smooth sensation of her white glove felt pleasant.

The night wind cooled down the heat in his body. The clouds above moved and the moon's face came into view.

He also saw the waning moon in the parade inside his dream, but its shape was different from before.

(Why? Why is the moon's shape different from before? No, why am I noticing such things?)

Lux lost his words towards the mysterious feeling of uneasiness.

When Lux was looking up towards the moon, Aeril in front of him suddenly smiled.

"It's too late to ask this but, what do you think? My figure in a dress."

"—You look beautiful, very much so. I cannot see you as a boy anymore now."

His awareness was pulled back by her voice. He stared hard at her charming figure.

She was wearing a small tiara on her head and a dress that had thin fabric above it.

And then the white gloves and tights on her arms and legs were enhancing the androgynous charm of Aeril's slender and well-proportioned body.

"Thank you. I'm satisfied today just from being able to hear Lux say that."

Aeril was walking from the second floor corridor that was facing the courtyard towards the terrace that was jutting to outside.

Lux also naturally followed her. She then twirled around with a graceful smile.

In the dark night, the sky was inlaid with stars, while countless lights could be seen on the ground.

Aeril who was standing out in the darkness looked so ephemerally beautiful that it made him speechless.

At the same time, the emotion welling up inside him constricted his chest.

When Lux noticed, he spoke out words of apology.

"More importantly, sorry——"

".....?"

When Lux bent his waist and lowered his head, Aeril's eyes opened wide.

"About Hayes and Listelka. I talked big, but in the end I couldn't save them. I was unable to even give Aeril any time to talk with them for the last time."

"——"

Aeril's eyes blinked in response to Lux's apology.

Before long it seemed she comprehended what Lux meant. She lowered her gaze and turned her back on him.

"——Lux-kun. You see, I'm thankful to you. Very much so, that no matter how many times I thank you it won't be enough. Because you were there, I was able to believe in the people of this era. I was able to head towards the path that I believe in."

When Lux raised his head, Aeril was turning only her head to look at him. Her braided silver hair was fluttering in the dark night.

She was directing a sorrowful but peaceful smile towards Lux and continued her words whisperingly.

She originally had the standing as an imperial family of the ancient era—the Lords. Even so she thought of the world and saved Lux and the others.

"But, even my elder sister and little sister had their own positions. They harmed the people of this world and attempted to one-sidedly rule with force. I think that cannot be allowed. However, we were taught to live like that. They could only see the world like that."

"....."

"It was only Lux-kun who was thinking about the matter of Hayes and Listelka-neesama. It's a selfish story even if I say so myself, but I think they

were saved just by your intention even after having that much terrible things done to you. That there was a possibility that they could mutually understand the people of this era too....."

"Aeril....."

Her kind smile and words soaked his wounded heart.

And then, the body warmth of the girl who was silently walking towards him lied on top of Lux.

".....-!"

"—I love you, Lux-kun."

Chu-, her small lips were pressed tightly above Lux's lips.

The time was stopping inside the night scenery for a few seconds of bewildered shock.

"I love your kind side. I love how you are unable to overlook when there is someone troubled in front of you and fight for them without feeling scared of getting hurt. I also love how you are doing your best without even complaining at all, and how clumsy you are at various things. And your slightly indecent side too, if it's Lux-kun—I'll permit it."

Squeeze Aeril put more strength into her arms that were entwined around his neck while expressing her feeling in rapid succession.

His heart was trembling by her pure and earnest feeling.

Lux's arms were reflexively going to embrace her—however, he was unable to.

"Eh?"

"—Geez, this is because my push is weak at the crucial timing. Even though it will be fine even if you lose to your desires for a bit more."

Aeril smiled wryly while complaining with slight sulkiness.

Lux was receiving a sensation as though his chest was clamped hard when looking at her expression while trying to confess.

That he already had a love relationship with Yoruka.

And then, how he was feeling guilt even towards that fact itself.

It was like there was one more girl if he remembered correctly, a girl who he had told of his love——

"That's, Aeril. I'm....."

"It's okay, Lux-kun. I know. I wanted to say it even while knowing that. It's regrettable. If only I could meet you——just a bit faster....."

Aeril hugged her own arm while smiling with self-depreciation.

"No. Even that is just an excuse. Those girls have been inside your heart from far before. Even if you aren't aware of it, Lux-kun, you loved all of them. As the opposite sex."

"....."

"I don't know whether what I'll be telling you after this is really something correct. But, I want Lux-kun to know it. Perhaps if it's you who saved us, then surely you will find some kind of answer..... I have such a hunch. Sayonara, Lux-kun. It was really fun until now."

Aeril showed her best smile and waved her hand.

Right after that, the moment he blinked, her figure disappeared.

The same like Singlen just now, it was as though she wasn't there since the beginning.

".....-!? ——What, is this sound and light?"

Mysteriously he didn't feel it was strange that Aeril disappeared right before his eyes.

In exchange his attention was completely taken away by another strange sight that suddenly manifested.

Flames were blazing up at a corner of the downtown. It was visible from the castle's terrace.

The bright red flickering flame and the rising white smoke.

The faintly audible sounds of sword fighting and the sounds of Drag-Rides moving.

"Why are the Drag-Knights out!? No, since when were they fighting!?"

Lux headed to the edge of the terrace and his body leaned out from the handrail while he was focusing his gaze.

It was hard to make it out from afar, but there was no doubt that there was a battle between Drag-Knights there.

A force of several dozen Drag-Knights seemed to be surrounding a single Drag-Knight, but in defiance to the difference in numbers, the lone Drag-Knight was the one with the superiority.

The Drag-Rides opposing the lone Drag-Knight were being shot down one-sidedly. Their number was being reduced at an accelerated speed.

(Who is fighting who? No, more importantly—why is no one noticing this!?)

Even though such a fierce battle was unfolding this nearby, not to mention his comrades inside the castle, even the guards weren't reacting.

Far from that, even the drunken people enjoying the parade who were walking near the battle weren't even paying attention to the battle.

That fact, that strangeness fiercely fanned up Lux's sense of danger.

(Is this an illusion that I'm seeing!? This is, this scene—!)

But, even while Lux was doubting his own perception, his body was reacting.

He pulled out his Sword Device and summoned the Wyvern that he equipped on his body.

First he flew towards the destination by taking a detour in order to observe the situation.

When the distance was gradually decreasing, Lux's head was hit by even more shock.

—

"You bastard—who are you-!? Were you sent by the queen!? Why are you.....gubaah!"

The question from a Drag-Knight was drowned out by his own scream of death agony.

The one who accomplished that was a girl clad in a crimson Divine Drag-Ride with four legs. It seemed to be a special type equipment that was similar to a Drake, but it was a unit that he saw for the first time.

Drooping mechanical dog ears were growing out from the pilot's head.

"It's because all of you are hindrances dearimasu. My apologies, but it will really help if you die here dearimasu."

The Automata girl with no light in her eyes was the Gear Leader who was managing the Ruin Hall—Ney Louches.

After the great war at Avalon, for some reason, even Krulcifer was unable to meet her in the Ymir Theocracy. And yet here she was massacring mysterious Drag-Knights.

That incomprehensible scene caused Lux to doubt his eyes while he was holding his breath.

It was obvious that the right to command her was stolen by someone just like when an Automata was under Hayes's control and she was made to do this.

(Who is controlling the Automata? For what!?)

With an effort Lux endured his feeling that wanted to immediately stop this and continued to observe.

The Automata wasn't killing the Drag-Knights of the New Kingdom's military. The uniform was different.

In that case, could they be the private army of some noble?

The nobles were summoned for the previous great war and they dispatched their subordinate Drag-Knights in order to obtain deeds of arms, but the majority of their forces should have gotten caught in Listelka's trap and destroyed by the revived seven Ragnarok.

Lux presumed that this was a force that was instead formed to cause trouble in the middle of the parade.

"You damn puppet! Why are you attacking us-!? What happened to Waybra!?"

".....!?"

One of the man yelled with a desperate look.

Lux recognized the face of the Drag-Knight who was taking command at the rear.

No—it wasn't recognition. The face of the man looked similar to someone else he knew.

The man who he fought in the past, the eldest son of one of the Four Great Nobles, Balzeride Kreutzer.

The looks of this man was like Balzeride who was a few years younger with longer hair.

(Sieg Kreutzer!? No, more importantly, he said Waybra just now—)

The noble who Dist told him about the other day, Waybra.

The man was a distant relative of the Old Empire's imperial family. He showed himself in the government faction called the Old Empire faction that was opposing the New Kingdom's administration.

And then he also heard from Dist that the second son of the house of Kreutzer, Sieg Kreutzer also obtained some kind of connection with that man and he was forming a Drag-Knight force.

Dist told him that he might try to do something bad in the middle of the parade.

Even so, the force the man gathered was only on the level of a speck compared to the scale of the Imperial Capital Recapture Plan that Hayes executed in the past.

No matter how worn down the battle force of the new kingdom had become, he wouldn't be able to do anything with just that much force.

(—!?)

Right after Lux thought that, he noticed a strange out of place feeling.

The wreckages of the Drag-Knights' mixed force that consisted of several dozen Drag-Rides.

For some reason a lot of them were made up from Drake's armor.

The special equipment type Drake had variegated abilities that Wyvern and Wyrms didn't have, but it could exhibit its effectiveness enough with just one or two of it in a squadron.

With Drake, the stability of the squadron would increase remarkably, but the effectiveness wouldn't change by much even if there was a lot of it in one group.

(—Why? Is it to keep watch of their surroundings? No, five or six people should be enough just for that, and if it's for spying using Drake's camouflage function, there is no need to assemble them in one place like this.)

He didn't understand.

The parts in order to derive the correct answer were fundamentally lacking within Lux's mind.

Was there anything else other than the information that Dist told him—

"You are really noisy dearimasu. You are unnecessary in the correct history. I will dispose of you."

Instantly, the red Divine Drag-Ride Ney Louches was wearing spouted out flame that was illuminating the surrounding area brightly.

The tip of the sharp sword that was thrust out next pierced the EX Drake of Sieg Kreutzer, burning it from the inside.

"—Gu, GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHH.....! Yo, you bastard-! You killed Waybra didn't you!? Was it Lux Arcadia's instruction!? Or else—gafuh!"

"It's night so please be quiet, dearimasu. No one can hear it though."

Ney Louches cut off Sieg's yell with a cold gaze.

Though imperfect he was still a user of EX Drake, but he was easily consigned to oblivion. That deed caused Lux to forget to breath.

(No—more importantly, why?)

Lux was shocked by the terrifying strength of the Automata while his thought was chasing after another puzzle.

(Why did Waybra who was a noble in the era of the Old Empire approach the Old Empire faction at this time? There must be something that he got his hands on. Information that might shake the foundation of the New Kingdom—)

And then, the words that Sieg spoke out before his death.

His misunderstanding that Ney Louches who attacked his group was sent by Lux or another person.

The fact that it was hinting at was——

"Are you noticing me, Lux Arcadia?"

".....-!?"

Ney Louches was directing her gaze towards the shadow of the building where Lux was hiding.

There was no change at all in her adorable appearance with the dog ears growing from her head, but her expression was far different from the time when she was getting attached to Krulcifer at the Ymir Theocracy's Hall.

(I don't understand what's with this situation. However, I'll have to fight if she is coming here——)

Lux tightly grasped his Wyvern's Blade and prepared to meet the opponent's attack.

But, after watching the situation wordlessly for a while, Ney Louches faced away.

"Roger dearimasu. You won't become an elimination target. Because you won't become a hindrance for the history revision anyway, and above all else, it seems you will be an essential personnel in the New Kingdom from here on."

"——!?"

Ney Louches turned around abruptly and took off her gaze from Lux.

She followed the force of Sieg Kreutzer that was starting to scatter and escape. She readied her Cannon and began shooting.

".....Stop it-! I'll erase the recording! I won't get involved with this case anymore! I'm begging you so spare me-!"

The person who was begging for his life with a voice that was inviting pity got his neck reaped mercilessly.

Next the people who got pursued from behind were screaming and running about trying to escape.

"Yo, you damn idiot! There is still other Drakes that are in possession of the recording! If you kill us, that recording will get published——gefuh!"

One soldier that was trying to bargain further got his mouth sealed with a flash of a sword.

(.....Recording? This force—Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer, are they in possession of some kind of secret?)

Were they recording some kind of event using the special equipment type Drake to use it as a negotiation material?

Then, on the last day of the previous parade, the corpse of the man in a tailcoat suit that Lux saw at the castle's courtyard was—

(The one who was killed by the Automata El Fajura at that time was, Waybra! And then the second time around, this time it was Sieg Kreutzer who got killed!? By a Gear Leader who is controlled by someone.....)

But, why?

Why were the Automata controlled?

Lux who was wracking his brain to solve the questions was perplexed.

Excluding Aeryl, the awakened Lords were completely annihilated, that was why there should be no one who was able to do that.

There was no way Aeryl who was in control of Avalon would do something like this.

Even the citizens who were witnessing this noisy battle weren't noticing the disturbance.

—

"I—know about it."

—

".....-!?"

Suddenly Aeryl's voice entered his ear.

When Lux immediately turned around, Aeryl who disappeared some time ago was standing there.

She was wearing the Academy's uniform that Lux praised as looking really good on her before. She was staring at Lux with a pained expression.

Her braided radiant silver hair was swaying because of the night wind.

"I knew the secret of the Zero Ruin that was sealed in the archive of the seventh Ruin Moon. But, it was just as Sir Singlen pointed out, I was hiding it. If this secret was known by someone else, surely another war will occur again. People trying to misuse it will surely appear. No—it won't end with just that much. That was why, I couldn't tell anyone the true function of Avalon."

Aeril who suddenly appeared was forming her words in a whisper.

Lux was already not bothered by the uncertainty of her existence.

Lux simply wanted to know her next words and he focused his hearing towards her.

"That is exactly, the Zero Ruin—Artifact(Transforming Drag-Ride) Ouroboros's Divine Raiment, Endless(Eternal Recurrence). Avalon is half the body of Ouroboros, it's also a dummy to hide the true shape of Ouroboros. A mighty power that far surpassed the perception manipulation I used to falsify my true identity is encroaching into the perception of humans within a range that covers the whole world, using each Ruin as its transmission amplification device."

Lux felt with certainty, that these weren't words that were being said right now.

These were words that Aeril were telling him at that time.

"Ouroboros can rewind people's memories—to change history. No matter how much destruction has happened, or how many millions of people were killed, it can realize a do over using perception manipulation that will adjust the events to fit the situation to a certain degree. The seven Ruins—Artifacts' other side is as devices to brainwash the people to revise the history while at the same time destroy things that are unnecessary for history, and creating the necessary things."

(So.....that's why. So, it's like that.)

Lux could understand the reason why Aeril couldn't tell anyone that fact even though she knew it.

If it became known that Avalon had that much power, if it became known that it would be possible to rule over other people as they pleased, anyone

would take action in order to steal it no matter what kind of method they had to use.

After all, the person who used that first would become the absolute victor. If other people's perception was thrown out of kilter and history was revised, other people wouldn't even notice that they were being exploited. That person would literally obtain the world in their hand.

Therefore, by the point of time that truth became known, something like peace between countries would be impossible.

The remaining sovereigns and influential people would pour everything they had into battle and rushed towards a bloody war.

Aeril, Lux, Airi, those who had the bloodline of Arcadia would inevitably get targeted.

"But people who received Baptism, the greater the extent of Baptism they received, the more they would be able to resist the perception manipulation to a certain degree. That's why, I'll leave the rest to you. It's fine even if you decide to not fight. It's fine even if you decide to follow someone else. You who accepted me who was your enemy as your comrade—you who are feeling concerned even towards Listelka-neesama and Hayes, if it's you, I will believe in your justice, your decision."

After saying that, Aeril's expression loosened into a smile that was wafting off loneliness.

She showed Lux the best smile she could make along with a voice that was filled with deep affection.

"—Sayonara, Lux-kun. I'm happy that I could meet you. It will be nice, if I can meet you again, within your consciousness at least."

"Aeril.....?"

Her figure was faintly melting into the night's lighting.

Before long her figure would vanish completely. Just before that happened, Lux came back to himself with a gasp.

"The elimination of deletion target—is finished dearimasu. Next is to wait for Endless's reactivation dearimasu, Arshalia-dono."

".....-!"

The battle was ending while Lux was listening to Aeryl's words.

The wreckages of the smashed Drag-Rides and the scorched corpses of the users were scattered all over the main street.

The crimson Divine Drag-Ride that Ney Louches was piloting killed everyone with certainty—, no, around four or five people seemed to manage to escape using Drake's camouflage.

(Are they.....being allowed to escape intentionally? It seems Ney Louches is moving by Arshalia's order.)

The Gear Leader of Avalon, Arshalia.

If the other Gear Leaders were moving by her direction, as expected the person who obtained Avalon was the one who was ordering this action.

"More importantly, it's puzzling why I'm being ordered to let them get away dearimasu. If it's me, I'll be able to kill them easily you know?"

"It's in order to arrive at the real thing, nanodesu."

"——!?"

A Drag-Ride with armor that was shining like a jewel was floating behind Lux without him noticing it.

It was the first time Lux was seeing that Divine Drag-Ride, but the rider was familiar to him.

Clothes that was tightly fitting to the body and looked similar to a pilot suit. Mechanical ears that looked like rabbit ears growing from the head.

The Automata they once discovered in the Ark and accompanied them before her authority was usurped by Hayes and she became their enemy—La Cruche.

"Sure thing, what do you mean by that dearimasu?"

".....Please wait a second nanodesu. The transmission from Captain Arshalia is interrupted. No, it's not like I'm saying the instruction from captain as though it's my own words nanodesu——"

The behavior of the easily carried away Automata who suddenly got flustered and starting to shift the responsibility felt slightly nostalgic——

However at the same time Lux was feeling dread at the content of their conversation.

Ney Louches who was looking exasperated suddenly hit her hand with a plop and looked up at her comrade who was floating midair.

"A contact came to me dearimasu. It seems that it's the idea of the new master. It's in order to smoke out all the hostiles during this parade dearimasu. With that the history will be correctly revised dearimasu."

"Right right, that's it nanodesu! I know that right from the start you know, nanodesu."

"In the end you completely forgot it didn't you dearimasu..... Good grief, this piece of junk—. I wonder why you didn't have the intellect strengthening remodeling done to you."

"You are acting haughty for a mere little sister nanodesu! Looks like it's necessary to teach you your place."

La Cruche flared up at Ney Louches who was nonchalantly making fun of her.

Lux was listening to that harmonious exchange, at the same time the puzzle pieces were settling down in Lux's head.

(History's revision.....? Someone is wishing for this situation and trying to manipulate history?)

Lux had an idea about someone who would do that.

(That's right. I, at that time—!)

Suddenly rainbow colored light overflowed from the two Automata before his eyes.

For some reason, the deathly battle at the abandoned capital Guernica more than two weeks ago was surfacing at the back of Lux's mind that was getting further away.





Episode 6 – The Beginning of Peace

Part 1

The old fortress site of the abandoned capital Guernica.

The long battle surrounding the last Ruin—Avalon was finally going to welcome its end.

Amidst the mountains of rubble and the dreary scenery that was filled with gunpowder smoke that showed the traces of intense battles, the Seven Dragon Paladins except Lux and Singlen along with Aeryl were facing Fugil who was wearing Bahamut.

Lux was at a distance where he was barely able to witness the battle.

Lux was listening to that in a state where he was hidden in the shadows of a damaged rampart.

"Everyone—I want you to lend me your ears for a bit while fighting."

He could hear the voice of Aeryl who was wearing Zahhak.

She was intentionally using the voice amplification function instead of Dragon Voice surely so that her voice could also reach Lux.

"I will tell you what I know, about the true function that is hidden in Avalon."

Like that she told all of them the secret of Avalon.

The Zero Ruin—Artifact Ouroboros's true shape, and the special quality of the Divine Raiment Endless.

It would consume vast energy in order to make all the Ruins resonate, but the power to rewrite the consciousness of all the humans on this continent would be activated in less than ten minutes.

Therefore, right now they had to defeat Fugil and stop that at all costs.

"I don't know how, but it seems that Fugil had once connected with the central. If time passes like this, history will be completely changed by him!"

Aeryl was saying that while holding a certain question in her mind.

This time, even though Fugil showed no signs of receiving the trials in order to use Avalon, yet he somehow had fulfilled the conditions to do just that.

Most likely this man had already performed history revision by his own will several times.

He was in possession of the whole of Avalon and completely controlled the Artifact Ouroboros.

"Hah! That joke really ain't funny. You are saying this sissy looking guy has rewritten the world until now? There is a limit even when falling into delusion yeah."

Cuelebre flew with fierce speed right after Greifer spat that out with exasperation.

He drew close to Fugil's Bahamut that was hovering in the air and struck using his Tail Blade with a sharp trajectory.

"—What an uninspiring man."

In response, Fugil smiled coldly and blocked it easily with Bahamut's great sword.

Tail Blade had joints that looked like a snake's stomach in its blade that could transform into the shape of a whip. It moved in order to twine around the defending great sword.

But, when Greifer pulled back the sword with all his strength, the opponent's sword didn't even twitch.

Not only did Bahamut's output surpass Cuelebre, even Greifer's body balance and the way he focused energy were completely seen through.

"Chih! Let go damn it!"

Not just that, with Bahamut's built-in special armament Linker Core, Tail Blade's motion got fixed in place instead.

"I have no time to humor all of you."

Fugil said casually. At the same time he swung down his great sword that was enveloped in energy.

He pulled back his entwined sword and swung it in order to destroy the opponent's Blade using the friction, but Cuelebre's Tail Blade wasn't severed apart, in exchange an impact ran through Bahamut's armor.

".....Guh!"

"It was you who got caught, hero-sama. Don't look down on commoners too much."

The instant Fugil swung his sword to destroy Tail Blade that was entwined around his sword's blade, the Divine Raiment Photon Dive was activated in counterattack.

With the Divine Raiment of invincibility that scattered all damage to the surroundings, the opponent's attack power got deflected back instead.

"You are acting recklessly again like usual."

"We are feeling the chill just from watching heree."

Aeril who saw Greifer's reversal of the situation was looking exasperated at his usual recklessness while the nearby Rosa was also blurting out something similar.

If the activation timing of Photon Dive wasn't matched with the instant Fugil swung his great sword to the end, it would be Greifer who would get done in instead.

He had to win in the prediction of each other's tactics and not miss the chance without the slightest deviation when moving. It was astonishing that he executed such marvelous technique so casually.

"And then drop dead now, hero-sama! You're going to be a legend like that yeah!"

When Fugil's Bahamut was sent flying by the impact, Greifer flew in pursuit.

The tip of Tail Blade was swung down while the enemy was off balance.

But, right before it hit, Fugil's very existence vanished.

"—Zero One."

".....Chih!"

Greifer clicked his tongue seeing Fugil disappeared using Ouroboros's special armament.

Surely he would use the same tactic like before. He was escaping to the space where no one could interfere with him and activate Reload on Fire, and then he would unleash his counterattack when he entered the accelerated state in the later five seconds.

Furthermore it was a timing that was aiming at right after Photon Dive's usage time limit ran out.

If the invincibility didn't run out, even Fugil would be unable to deal damage to Cuelebre.

"Then, I'll also cut off my Divine Raiment first yeah. The next time he show his face, it will be——"

"——You idiot! That's a trap!"

Magialca angrily yelled from the rear. Greifer gasped in response.

But, exactly a second later, the instant Greifer turned off his Photon Dive, Fugil and Bahamut reappeared.

"——Wha-!?"

Of course there was no way Greifer was turning off his Divine Raiment without thinking of anything.

If it was right after Fugil in his Bahamut got hit by impact and was unbalanced, Greifer estimated that a few seconds would be necessary until he could counterattack even if he escaped to a foreign space.

But, in reality Fugil launched a counterattack right away.

Greifer suspected whether Fugil's unbalanced posture was just faked, however he shook his head.

(——No. I wasn't tricked or anything. I simply misread it! This guy's true strength as a Drag-Knight!)

At the very least, the damage from the attack before really reached until Fugil's flesh body.

But regardless of that, Fugil recovered his balance with speed that surpassed Greifer's predictions and counterattacked.

Greifer was seeing the vestige of the Nocturnal Dilwy that he fought in the past from Fugil's inhumanly absurd piloting skills.

Fugil's appearance was truly that of a normal human, but his movements were out of the realm of a normal human's.

When Greifer's body shrunk back from the approaching threat, the space in front of him flickered like a heat haze.

Right after that, Cuelebre was pulled back and Fugil's Blade cut through empty air.

"Mahapurana—I'll leave the rest to you."

The trajectory control of Soffice's Vritra just barely made it in time to pull Greifer back from Fugil's range.

Furthermore, Greifer noticed Mel who was gliding at low altitude as though she was crawling on the ground that was full of rubble.

"Aerial Buster!"

The flickering heat haze that he saw just now was Mel's Divine Drag-Ride—Wyrn Mode Ddraig Gweiber using its special armament.

She was gliding above the ground while ejecting out combustible gas. She then ignited that gas and set the air ablaze in a wide range.

When Fugil escaped to the space that couldn't be interfered with using Zero One just now, Mel was releasing the gas in preparation to unleash the explosion.

And then, after Greifer got pulled out from that area, she succeeded in attacking only Fugil.

But, even now when Fugil was swallowed by the explosion blast that possessed terrific might, he was looking down to the battlefield with an unruffled air.

"—He is unharmed!? Did he dodge the explosion just now!?"

Mel was shocked, in response Soffice was quietly shaking her head.

"No.....! Bahamut's armor is certainly worn down. But, there is almost no damage for the user."

Aeril who heard that explanation also nodded in agreement.

"If my imagination is correct, that man isn't a normal human. From here it's just my guess but, his whole body has been applied with Baptism. Fugil should have obtained tough endurance and body performance that far surpasses even a Nocturnal under Elixir's effect."

".....Juust wait a second. Is Elixir something that can be applied that easily? Wasn't it explained that there is the possibility of dying from shock just from making Elixir take a hold of a part of the body?"

"Of course. Even us imperial family only had Baptism applied into one eye and nothing more. The greater the amount of Elixir, the stronger the rejection the body will show. That man, he isn't normal. Most likely he had the greatest amount of Elixir administered to him where he overcame abnormal amounts of pain and abnormally low chance of success through unbelievable length of time."

99,9% chance of failure.

No, perhaps it was even lower than that. Fugil struggled through such probability, endured agony that was beyond the imagination, and then trained to be able to move his body that had been transformed into a fantastic form.

Even just a Baptism to a single eye made Aeril thought that her mind might break. It was because Aeril had gone through such thing that it made her unable to imagine what Fugil had gone through instead.

Even though Fugil's body capabilities were already far removed from a normal human, but his mind was just as abnormal.

He didn't get drunk and indulged in such inhuman power. They could feel the resolve to simply fight the enemy from him.

"But even I, there is no way I can lose! Until I take revenge for the murder of my big sister and little sister! Until I stop that guy's scheme——"

When Aeril displayed her spirit like that, Fugil sent a glance to her in response.

He evaded the Cannon that Mel's Ddraig Gwiber fired and the bombardment from Rosa's Gorynych while his lips suddenly loosened into a smile.

"——What a foolish sentiment. So the imperial princess of the Lords can only fight for her own convenience after all."

"You are saying that, but you yourself, what are you fighting for? Are you planning to rearrange the world? Or perhaps, are you planning to destroy it?"

Soffice fired a lightning attack from her satellite weapon special armament, Vajra that was placed on the sky above towards Bahamut.

But, Fugil erased the attack's energy using Zero One, then he immediately left that spot and released the lightning attack he stole as a counterattack.

"It's neither of them. I have no intention to save the world or anything like that. I'm trying to save people."

"Stay within bounds even if you are playing with words. Even though you also betrayed and killed the Lords already."

Gorynych was steadily closing the distance and it finally caught Fugil in its attack range.

Its weapon—the Scythe was swung powerfully and sliced off the armor of the left arm.

"It's working! Our attacks will land if all of us are working together! We can destroy Bahamut!"

Aeril attacked further with her Breath Whip and diverted Fugil's attention.

But, even though a part of the armor was destroyed, there wasn't even a speck of anxiety in Fugil's expression.

"It's pointless. I don't even need to defend using Zero One against an attack that came from the likes of you."

"You're right. —Because, since some time ago I was only attacking in order to buy time after all."

Fugil's eyebrows knitted slightly at Aeril's fearless smile.

Right after that, the straight punch of a powerful arm that was like a battering ram directly landed on Bahamut with a speed that even the eye couldn't follow.

—*DOGUN-!*

".....-!?"

"You were careless there, hero-dono. It's troubling that you are forgetting about me you know?"

It was the installation special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride Jormundgandr that Magialca was wearing.

It had seven powerful arms that looked like the masts of a huge ship. One of those arms completely destroyed Fugil's armor.

What Aeril made Fugil forgot using Zahhak's Brain Hack was Magialca's very existence.

She inconspicuously activated it to make Fugil incautious against Magialca's attack so he wouldn't be able to use the special armament Zero One to block it.

Aeril had executed this tactic several times since slightly a while ago, but it didn't bear fruit until now because she was waiting until Fugil himself entered the attack range on his own.

Aeril was taking into consideration that if she gave instructions to everyone using Dragon Voice to guide Fugil to move in front of Magialca, Fugil would get an inkling of the tactic.

Therefore, she was waiting for this accidental chance.

She was repeatedly attacking in a way that could be dodged easily and waiting until Fugil entered the attack range of Jormundgandr.

"Juust as I thought, our captain is really outrageous eeh."

Although it was a blow that came in the enemy's defenseless moment, that power which pulverized Bahamut with a single punch astonished Rosa.

When Fugil's flesh body was sent flying behind, Greifer and Mel flew after him.

"Several of your mysteries are still remaining, but I don't really give a damn. Drop dead here!"

"You aren't human no matter how I look at it, so you don't mind even if you get killed right?"

"—Zero One."

But, the unarmored Fugil, whose back crashed against the mountain of rubble, casually pulled out his Sword Device.

At the same time a huge purple Drag-Ride was summoned and his figure vanished together with it.

".....He vanished into the inviolable space again!? I see, the Bahamut that got destroyed just now wasn't the main unit."

Soffice who saw that murmured expressionlessly and put up her guard to the surrounding.

What Fugil was wearing wasn't the main unit of Bahamut. Till the end it was just Ouroboros's special armament Infinity.

That was to say, even if that Bahamut was destroyed, it was still possible to use Zero One.

"Oi Aerial! Use Zahhak's Divine Raiment to make that guy forget the special armament he is using to vanish from space right now! If you do that he ain't gonna be able to run away again!"

"——"

Aerial was holding her breath nervously while nodding.

Fugil managed to escape at the last moment, but this time she wouldn't let him get away again.

Bahamut had been destroyed. Aerial stood ready in preparation of Fugil who had lost his armor to reappear.

"Just wait a second. Rather than that didn't something come out before he vanished? I remember seeing it before, that Drag-Ride——"

".....!? Everyone, get away from there! Those with flying type fly higher——.....!?"

Magicalca gasped at Rosa's words and gave instructions to everyone from behind.

But, the purple Drag-Ride that instantly appeared in the middle of the six of them released a jet black surge.

"——Missing Faith."

".....Wha-!?"

The Divine Raiment of Divine Raiment neutralization that the land battle type Divine Drag-Ride Typhon used.

Furthermore that ability temporarily weakened a Drag-Ride's power output. Because of that, everyone's Divine Drag-Rides were powered down.

In that instant, Fugil dashed with Typhon that he was wearing and attacked the descending Aerial's Zahhak first.

"Kuhh!"

She counterattacked with Breath Whip without delay, but the motion of the whip that was dulled caused it to be easily caught by Typhon's huge arm.

Until now they had only seen the form of Bahamut, but Fugil was perfectly controlling even the land battle type Drag-Ride too.

The whip that was caught by Typhon was pulled and Aeryl who was wearing Zahhak became unbalanced.

The instant Aeryl tried to escape to behind so she wouldn't get pulled instead, Typhon's left shoulder fired out the wire of Pile Anchor.

"Uah.....!?"

The tip of the pile drove into Zahhak's waist armor and Aeryl's throat was choked from the impact she felt.

Fugil wasted no time to pull the wire right away.

The right armored arm of Typhon that was waiting had already been filled with the concentrated energy of Biting Flare.

(This is bad! I won't be able to dodge! My Divine Raiment also won't return to the usable state for a few more seconds!)

Aeryl was pulled closer by Typhon with terrific momentum while feeling for real the dreadfulness of the enemy's ability for the first time.

Ouroboros's special armament—Infinity.

It wasn't just able to transform to the shape of every kind of Divine Drag-Ride, even if the Drag-Ride was destroyed it could summon another Divine Drag-Ride.

Therefore, the options as well as the number of regenerations available to the user was literally infinite.

The moment she shuddered from that dreadfully overwhelming battle strength, Greifer and Cuelebre leaped from behind Fugil.

"Release Aeryl! You shitty hero!"

"—Zero One."

Greifer and Cuelebre were temporarily banished. They were made to disappear to the inviolable space.

In exchange the large frame of Rosa's Gorynych thrust away Fugil's Typhon from the side and Aeril was saved, but—

"—Biting Flare."

The target of the attack that Fugil was going to unleash changed towards Rosa who was grappling him.

The energy that was concentrated into the right palm of Typhon was directly sent into the armor and exploded.

The huge dark grey armor Rosa was wearing was smashed apart and she was sent flying to far behind.

"Rosa-!"

"—!? I'm.....alright!"

Soffice immediately raised her voice, but Rosa's eyes weren't dead even though she was being swallowed in a flame blast.

The instant her armor was blasted, she removed her armor by herself using Break Purge and suppressed the destruction's damage to the minimum.

"Then, now is the time to—!"

Mel assaulted with Ddraig Gwiber in Wyvern Mode aiming at the opening when Typhon's Divine Raiment was dispelled, furthermore it was when Typhon had just struck with high firepower using its special armament.

But, when the battleaxe it was holding was swung down toward the enemy's shoulder, Greifer and Cuelebre who were banished just now reappeared in front of Mel.

"Don't tell me-!?"

"—Kuh, so it's like that huh!"

Mel who was accelerating with her momentum driving her couldn't stop her attack.

Greifer immediately used his Blade to block the battleaxe, but in that opening that took less than a few seconds, Fugil's Typhon unleashed a spinning kick.

"—Mahapurana!"

The moment Mel and Greifer received the armored leg's kick, Soffice's Vritra pulled them from behind and they avoided a direct hit.

Like that they took a large distance for the moment, leaving behind Magialca at the front line while they rallied themselves.

The reactivation of a Divine Raiment that was neutralized by Missing Faith made it in time in a hair's breadth.

"How unbelievable. To think that the ability will be this absurd....."

"For the number of regenerations to be limitless too..... So the special armament Infinity hasn't displayed its real ability until now huh."

Rosa was lamenting while repairing Gorynych's armor with her Divine Raiment Tartaros Frame, and Magialca responded with a bitter expression.

Furthermore Aeryl was grasping the situation while at the bottom of her heart she was trembling at the actions Fugil executed a while ago.

"What he immediately summoned after Bahamut was destroyed was Typhon's armor..... And then, in order to erase the opening when he was connecting to it, he used Zero One at the same time and escaped to the space of another dimension....."

"You are saying that Fugil cannot be stopped even if we destroy his armor? Not only that, each time he gets cornered, he can summon the optimum Divine Drag-Ride for the situation at that time one after another....."

Mel muttered at the end in vexation at Ouroboros's—and then to Fugil's dreadfulness once more.

Originally, even just to be able to use one kind of Divine Drag-Ride skillfully, extraordinary stamina, mental strength, and skill were necessary.

That was something that all the members of the Seven Dragon Paladins, the aces who represented various countries, knew firsthand.

Thus, they comprehended just how much of a threat Fugil, who was controlling an infinite number of Divine Drag-Rides and tactics, truly was.

Of course they themselves were also super first class Drag-Knights.

They didn't have the slightest intention of pulling back without fighting, but they were losing sight of how to make a breakthrough against this enemy's bottomless power that far surpassed a Ragnarok.

"—Don't get flustered youngsters!"

But, Magialca's fierce encouragement flew into the ears of the elites who were on the verge of getting disheartened.

"Just because that guy can exchange Drag-Rides repeatedly, it doesn't mean that we are facing an infinite number of Divine Drag-Rides all at once! You are better at handling your own Divine Drag-Rides than that guy right? The way to break through this is already visible!"

An angry roar was let out along with a fighting spirit from the small body that was mismatched with her age.

The members who heard that loosened their expressions and each of them showed a fearless smile.

It had only been three minutes since they started to fighting Fugil—everyone was exhausted from the battle that was wearing down their nerves, but there was nearly ten minutes remaining until the time when the Ruin would be reactivated.

[The breakthrough you said, that would be that thing he used to vanish and reappear right? The special armament of Ouroboros called Zero One something—]

[That's a good guess for you, exactly.]

Greifer was unusually sending his voice to everyone through Dragon Voice. Magialca immediately responded to that.

Fugil's true strength was also overwhelming, but it was Zero One that was giving him an advantage at the crucial offense and defense.

It turned him into zero by transferring him to a foreign space where it was impossible for material and energy from here to interfere.

That power to switch his existence like an on-off switch was exactly the most troublesome thing.

[Hah! It's amazing you can say that shamelessly, captain-sama. Actually, you were waiting for one of us to catch on that weren't you? In order to probe the working of that special armament.]

[Right. Though originally I planned to take the initiative and become the sacrifice. After all, my Jormundgandr is too gigantic that it feels like it will be hard to make it vanish.]

Magialca boldly replied like that towards Greifer's pointing out.

The remaining members could be heard sighing in exasperation through the Dragon Voice.

[And, did you understand something, Greifer?]

[You mean when I got banished by Zero One? There was a spherical space with a surrounding that was made from silver walls. That was all I could confirm in that instant. After that, it felt like time stopped until I reappeared back here, I didn't know about anything that happened outside.]

In other words, Greifer's consciousness became cut off except in that instant when Greifer was transferred into that space.

[Could it be, that the place Zero One transferred you to was the inside of Ouroboros or Avalon?]

[——]

Aeril quickly interrupted. Her words sent everyone into thinking.

After just a few seconds, Magialca responded with agreeing words.

[That hypothesis is possible. The possibility that it's making use of the same teleportation system of the Ruins to instantly teleport to the inside is high. Most likely, inside that spherical space where the target is teleported, the time was stopped except for the user Fugil. However, it seems that it cannot store huge material.]

[.....Say, even the lightning attack of my Vajra also got taken in and out though, what about that?]

Soffice retorted with an emotionless voice.

When the special armament of her Vritra, Vajra's lightning attack was erased before this, even that energy could also be rematerialized back.

[I'm only guessing but, that spherical space must be provided with a device to reflect energy. It seems that it has a property to not let the preserved thing to deteriorate or decay. More importantly——]

[If there is only one of that preservation space, once it entered off state after taking in something, he won't be able to use Zero One anymore unless he turn the on state again by releasing the last thing he took, is that what you mean?]

[.....]

Rosa's deduction caused everyone connected to the communication to fall silent.

They recalled the battle until now and judged that it was almost definitely the truth.

[I had measured the time, and it might be that it's also unable to keep the off state for a long time. At most it is able to keep the target's existence vanished for around one or two minutes. Though this is still not certain.]

[In any case, it doesn't seem like we have any other choice than to assume that hypothesis as correct and try to corner him with that.]

[Yeah—and then at present, that guy has a fatal opening. There is no other time but now to take advantage of that!]

Right after Magialca said that, Mel flew with her Ddraig Gwiber and approached Fugil once more.

"How foolish. Are you unable to even realize that it's pointless?"

The instant Fugil confronted her with a scornful laugh, Mel was convinced that what Magialca pointed out was correct.

"It's no good to one-sidedly decide everything you know? After all I have seen a lot of people who laughed and said [it's impossible] to me just because I'm young."

"Then allow me to teach you, that it's a foolish act."

The Typhon that Fugil was wearing skated toward Mel's Ddraig Gwiber and fired countless Anchors.

"-.....!?"

The tip of a Pile Anchor opened vertically like a snake that was going to take a bite and it snapped at her shoulder armor. Then the wire was reeled back and Mel was pulled.

But, Ddraig Gwiber transformed in that instant and it changed shape into a single Drake.

"Transforming function.....that's not it. A different fake huh."

"You are noticing that too late eeh. I heard that the likes of hero will often get tricked buut, are you also that kind of type?"

What Fugil thought as Ddraig Gwiber was the special armament of illusion Sin Phantom from Rosa's Gorynych.

Combined with its one other special armament, the unmanned Drag-Rides Twelve Vice, created the disguised decoy.

But, Fugil's eyebrows didn't even twitch. He used Typhon's left arm to grasp the base of the wire and swung it around while also making use of the centrifugal force.

The unmanned Drag-Ride that was caught at the tip of the wire was controlled like a flail and then without pause it was thrown at Rosa.

"Kuuuh.....!"

Rosa blocked the attack of the iron lump using her Scythe. The pain from the impact made her expression distort.

But, using that opening Cuelebre activated Photon Dive and charged from behind Fugil.

"I see, so you stopped covering for your comrades. But, do you think you will be able to defeat me with just that much?"

"You better use it right away yeah, that Divine Raiment of Typhon!"

The instant Greifer yelled, Magialca's Jormundgandr fired its gigantic Cannon to give cover fire. Soffice's Vritra also sent down the lightning attack from its satellite weapon.

Within the vortex of lighting and explosion blasts, Greifer assaulted without any care at all.

His comrades put their faith in the invincible state of Photon Dive and rained down their full power bombardment.

The Divine Raiment of invincibility that Cuelebre possessed could be neutralized by Missing Faith.

Conversely, even for Fugil it should be harsh to deal with this attack without doing that.

If there was another possibility that would allow him to dodge, it would be Ouroboros's Zero One but—

"——Biting Flare"

He used the Anchor to pull Rosa's unmanned Drag-Ride he captured until his hand, then Fugil activated Typhon's special armament.

He collided the explosion energy to the bombing and neutralized the impact, furthermore he fired Pile Anchor to right beside him.

His aim was the thick rampart that was around 200 ml from his spot.

He would use the Anchor that stabbed into the rampart to reel himself and moved away. He attempted to escape from the center of the explosion but——

"My bad but, I won't let you."

"——!?"

The tip that was shooting toward the rampart had its direction changed abruptly by Vritra's Divine Raiment Mahapurana. It flew away to directly opposite direction.

The huge arm of Jormundgandr that was camping there grasped the fired tip of the Anchor.

"Isn't this just like grasping the red string of fate? But, you have grown much older than my preference for me to take you into consideration."

Fugil's Typhon was already carrying out the action of winding back the wire of Pile Anchor.

In other words, it was like Fugil was flying towards Magialca's position by himself.

Like this it wouldn't be really meaningful even if he activated Missing Faith.

At the same time, because Pile Anchor was being grasped by Jormundgandr, he also couldn't escape using Zero One.

It was because the mass of the lump of target was too big to have its existence deposited and withdrawn into the on-off state.

——That was to say, this very instant was their biggest chance of victory.

Magialca used two of Jormundgandr's huge arms to launch a pincer attack towards the approaching Typhon from left and right.

From the right was a fist, and from the left was an armored arm that had its tip shaped into a Blade, aiming to sever apart Fugil's torso.

"—Fuh"

In response Fugil quickly spread out both of Typhon's arms and blocked the approaching weapons from both sides.

However in that instant, his front became empty.

"The barrier of land battle type Divine Drag-Ride is tough, but how about we test how far it will hold?"

In front of Fugil and Typhon, a giant cannon muzzle that was even larger than that armor was thrust out.

Extremely thick light was fired from the Cannon that had gathered energy until the limit.

—*DOoOOON!*

The atmosphere shook and terrific heat and shockwaves burst out.

But, that cannon shot that matched even Lisha's Seven Heads vanished the moment it hit.

"—Zero One!? He cannot make himself or the opponent vanish, so he used it towards the enemy's attack?"

Rosa who saw that from a bit further away was looking surprised while gritting her teeth.

"So it's blocked, but if it's looked from another way, he is already in a checkmate now."

Magialca pressed on as though to say that she had predicted this.

She was pulling back one more of her armored arms to behind and concentrated energy into it.

In that instant where a straight thrust from Jormundgandr's huge arm was going to be unleashed in one more second, Magialca's sight was covered by a flash.

"It's you who are in a checkmate you see, —Zero One."

"—!?"

The Cannon attack that was turned into off state just now was let out from zero distance.

It was fired at the instant when Magialca was going to turn into offense and hit Jormundgandr directly.

Its main body was swallowed by flame blast and it was covered from view along with a faint scream that leaked out from Magialca.

"Ku——!"

This happened in less than a few seconds.

Magialca discovered the weak point of Typhon that was produced by Infinity and the flaw of the special armament Zero One. She then executed a tactic that took advantage of them.

But, due to the special armament Zero One that combined offense and defense into one, at the very end Fugil came out on top—wasn't what happened.

——*PAKII! BAKI BAKI BAKI BAKIII-!*

The barrier that was laid out in front of Typhon burst out. Its armor was squashed and smashed up into pieces.

"——!?"

The Seven Dragon Paladins including Aeryl who noticed that incomprehensible result first were speechless.

Looking closer, the straight thrust from Jormundgandr's huge arm that was drawn back before this was piercing into Fugil's Typhon.

Just when they thought that the main Cannon's attack was sent back by Zero One and Magialca got greatly damaged and defeated, she actually only had her armor and pilot suit slightly damaged while her expression was still keeping her composed smile.

"She parried the returned cannon attack using the armored arm and barrier while counterattacking.....?"

"No, that's not all. She converted the damage she received to amplify Jormundgandr's attack power!"

After Mel muttered in bewilderment, Aeryl added her explanation in excitement.

With that the remaining members also clearly comprehended what happened. It was Jormundgandr's Divine Raiment, Hell Tempest.

It was a mechanism which reduced the damage that the user received while storing a portion of the damage as the Drag-Ride's energy.

It was possible to choose the timing to release the stored energy through each weapon.

In other words Magialca reduced the power of the Cannon attack she received just now while at the same time converting that power into her own energy. She added that energy into the straight thrust that she unleashed.

Magialca was applying the principle of martial arts to parry that made use of the opponent's strength to the operation of her Drag-Ride in a different form from her student Philuffy.

".....Our captain-sama is an outrageously sly raccoon yeah. Acting to be in a disadvantage like that in battle, she ain't losing even against the vice captain ain't she?"

Greifer was surprised and astonished while praising Magialca's technique.

Normally she never really showed her battle because of her role as commander or mediator in negotiations, but Magialca's battle ability was a step above the members here.

And that—was proven at this place.

"Well, that's how it is. I don't know how many years you have lived, but it's naïve to try to win against this merchant me in haggling tactics."

DOUN!

Jormungandr's Cannon smashed Typhon and further shot through Fugil.

"Be careful! He can escape into the other space again.

Because Typhon's armor that was restrained by Jormundgandr was torn off from Fugil, he could use Zero One on himself once more.

If he summoned a new Divine Drag-Ride using Infinity at that chance, then they would need to start from the beginning again.

Soffice yelled in panic based on that apprehension, but Magialca already took measures.

"It's not a worry. My countermeasure is perfect."

Jormundgandr's seven giant arms—the armored arm that had Wire Tail stretching out from its tip was entangling Fugil's torso ahead.

In other words, because the mass of the gigantic Jormundgandr was clinging on him, he was unable to escape to the inviolable space.

"Fuu....."

The clear superiority made Aeryl and the other members whose mind was stiffened with nervousness to relax instantly.

If it was like this, it would be their victory as long as there was no intervention.

At the very least, Aeryl and the others were convinced of that.

In that instant,

"—Splendid. Even from among all the people who confronted me in the past, there weren't many that were as skilled as you all."

"Hou? Your sense in making excuses isn't so good there."

Magialca replied with a fearless smile, even so she attacked further without holding back.

She poured her strength into the rope that was created from a steel thread of Mythrildite and gradually strengthened the constriction pressure on Fugil's torso to make him lose consciousness.

But, even then Fugil's expression was staying composed.

"But, I cannot say the same for your brain. Have you forgotten that I'm playing around to buy time?"

Fugil's right hand that became the only part of his body that was free quickly pulled out the Sword Device in his sword belt.

If it was a normal human, the pain would make them unable to even move. But Fugil didn't even pay it any mind and pushed the trigger on the handle with his finger.

"—!?"

Seven colored light was instantly spread out with Fugil's body as the center.

At the same time, the voice of the Automata Arshalia resounded directly inside the brain of Aeril and the other Seven Dragon Paladins.

—

【—Those who aren't wearing Drag-Rides and their movement won't be perceived in this world】

—

When they noticed, the figure of Fugil who was restrained by Wire Tail suddenly vanished.

It happened even though everyone was focusing their sight on him alertly. That fact made them dumbfounded.

"-.....!? He vanished!? How the hell!?"

"Even though he shouldn't be able to use Zero One, how——!?"

Greifer and Mel yelled in shock.

".....I don't understand. What in the world"

"Someone is saying, that something is happening just noow....."

Soffice and Rosa muttered in bewilderment. Right after that Magialca gasped and moved Jormundgandr.

The place where Fugil existed until just now.

The giant arm's fist struck the space that had Wire Tail coiling around it.

—But, there was no feedback and it ended with only the ground's rubbles getting smashed.

"Chih!"

After Magialca clicked her tongue, a voice came from an empty space.

"You noticed a few seconds too late there, merchant. All of you are unable to catch me anymore. All of you should realize already. The world's rule at this abandoned capital——"

Fugil's words were spoken out dispassionately.

Even though not even his presence could be sensed, they could hear only his voice.

Aeril who noticed that out of place feeling gasped in surprise.

"World's rule? The voice speaking inside my head just now, don't tell me——"

"I see, it means the rule that is set up inside this territory of light huh. So this is that guy's—Ouroboros's Divine Raiment."

"Wait a second! This territory of light is more than a few kl in radius you know? You are saying everything in our sight, a space this vast has its rule controlled and overwritten completely?"

".....-!"

Mel raised her objection at Magialca's muttering.

However, no one was able to voice any rebuttal toward that.

Therefore, it was speaking volumes about that bottomless power.

"You asked before, what is my objective correct? I'll teach you as a reward for coming this far. The hero's mission that I ought to accomplish——"

Fugil's voice that sounded like it was flowing from the darkness of emptiness.

Everyone was lending an ear to his talk that took less than a minute while staying perplexed.

—

"Every, one.....run, away....."

A slight distance away.

Lux who was lying down on rubbles reacted to the territory of light by lifting up his face.

Even though he was desperately letting out his voice, it was too feeble and didn't reach them.

".....Coming. The Artifact that Fugil possess.....all, anything and everything will, return to the start——"

The yell that earnestly squeezed out from his throat was waking up Lux's own memory.

—

The day of revolution five years ago.

Count Atismata was tricked by the information that came from a traitor who was a spy sent by the emperor and got killed.

Furthermore in the audience hall, the captured Airi was used as a hostage that sealed Lux's actions.

But, Fugil and Bahamut who appeared at that time slaughtered the imperial guards and the vassals, and then—

"No! That's not it! I'm asking you what your objective is! Why are you destroying this old empire? Even though it was you yourself who saved this country a few hundred years ago!"

Lux who had entrusted Airi to a safe place and came back questioned his elder brother.

And then he was given an answer.

The nightmarish memory was resurrected. It overlapped with the words Fugil spoke out.

Part 2

"—A hero opposes fate and wishes for salvation. A hero is the ally of the weak."

—

The castle of Arcadia Empire that was enveloped in the sparks of rising flames.

Two Bahamuts were confronting each other with the night sky that was painted jet black and red at the background.

"The ally, of the weak.....you say?"

Lux showed a dubious and uncanny look. Fugil smiled in response to that and replied in affirmation.

The revolution of Lux and the others failed due to the spy that the emperor sent to Count Atismata, and Airi was taken hostage.

Fugil who suddenly appeared there saved Lux and Airi, disposed of the imperial guards in the audience hall, and after that he ordered Lux who returned back to purge the imperial family and the chief vassals.

Fugil said now that Count Atismata had died, such act was necessary in order for Lux to bring together the people as the new king.

Fugil further said with that it would be possible enough to revise history.

"My wise younger brother. Why did you pick up your sword? You who were originally in a position that was far away from conflict continued to challenge your fate to the degree that you even resolved yourself to hurt and steal from others, and you arrived until this battlefield, why is that?"

"What are you.....saying? Are you trying to dodge the question!? I'm asking you your true identity and objective!"

The uneasiness welling up from his body.

An emotion that was similar to terror caused Lux's voice to turn rough.

"Dodging the question? I'm answering your question. Surely you are wishing for the salvation of the weak. The strong called the Old Empire that has enlarged itself too much. The one-sided exploitation by the royalty and nobility using armed might and authority. The bottomless unreasonableness that is born from that system. You too have witnessed it and have had your precious things taken away from you. —That was why, you tried to stand up."

"....."

"But, do you know? The ancestors of the imperial family of the Arcadia Empire in the beginning were also existences who were persecuted and exploited. They too wished to have the average livelihood. They wished from their hearts, for a normal life without unjust discrimination and irrationality. I had watched that until now. Over and over, so many times."

Lux couldn't comprehend what Fugil was talking about.

No, he was refusing to recognize it.

Because that meant that this man wasn't a normal human, but someone who had been alive for more than a thousand years.

And on top of that he had burned into his eyes the repeating negative history and fought on until now.

(There is no way that's true. There is no way, such thing can possibly—)

Lux's rationality denied it.

On the other hand, somewhere inside him there was a part of him that was accepting these preposterous words of his elder brother.

"—In the past, there was a girl. While she was an imperial family member, she possessed a genius like someone enlightened and wished to use the power of the Ruins for the sake of the people. Using her brain that had been strengthened with Baptism, she moved Avalon and prayed for the salvation of those who were unrewarded."

Fugil dispassionately formed his words as though he was talking to himself. Nostalgically.

Benevolently.

At the same time, it looked like a bottomless disquieting aura was oozing out from this man's whole body.

"She wasn't just praying, but also took action. At that time she even saved this me who was called as a filthy evil, an existence that was an enemy for her. It was at an era so long ago, where the conflict was more severe and cruel, you see."

".....What, do you mean?"

"However, what do you think will change just from saving one of the weak? The system that is created by the strong cannot be overturned that easily. At present, Count Atismata has been killed. I guess you won't believe it but, the count too was also intending to slaughter the whole imperial family just like me. If it's necessary, he would kill even you. He was intending to accomplish the revolution with such strong resolve, as the symbol of the side of the weak."

".....-!?"

'No way'—Lux thought.

That was because at the beginning Count Atismata who was on the Anti-Old Empire faction had promised that at the very least he would guarantee Lux and Airi's safety, and he would also carefully handle the treatment of the Old Empire's imperial family and people close to them with a positive outlook.

However, thinking really carefully, Fugil's explanation was rational.

If the fact that Count Atismata was borrowing the strength of someone from the Old Empire's side became known by the people, there was the possibility that it would become a huge stain.

It would be a good plan to get rid of Lux and Airi for the sake of sealing their mouths too.

"Let me say this first, I don't have any intention to disgrace the count's honor or anything. That is just how troublesome this corpulent system has become. It won't be affected at all just by saving a few of the weak. In the end the people who are rising up will be crushed by the existing system and knocked down once more to the bottom. They will have everything taken away from them as much as possible, by the people who are making this system."

"——"

The trend of male chauvinism and the absolute ruling by the royalty and nobility.

In a country where the existence of disparity due to the difference in status was absolutely normal, the power relationship couldn't be changed easily.

"Therefore, a leader who is worthy to be the core is necessary in order to save the weak. A person who will overturn the system and bring about balance. After such person lead his clan or organization and obtains a powerful trump card, only then can the weak possibly defeat the strong for the first time. That's why, it's essential to sort the weak to find someone who possess the quality, talent, and then the will to fight, then saving, and if necessary protecting and raising such person. That is—the salvation system that is programmed into Avalon."

The castle at the background was blazing brightly even during the talk.

The flame was fanned up by strong wind to wildly undulate and rise up.

The mission of hero that Fugil was talking about.

Lux would be standing at the center of the [balance] that it would bring about.

He had lost his mother, and his grandfather was executed.

In order to protect his important little sister and childhood friend, Lux was awakened to his mission.

And then through many twists and turns he arrived on this path, but was everything just because of Fugil's plan?

Was he only chosen in order to create the history that caused the downfall of the Arcadia Empire?

"With that the world will finally change. The weak can strike and destroy the strong's stronghold. From there the victor will exert their strength in order to create balance, eventually time will pass and move again. Perhaps the victor's foundation will become even more unshakeable, or perhaps the loser will make a comeback, or perhaps a new power will appear. In any case the balance will tilt once more."

"....."

Saving, choosing, and training the weak, then making that person to assemble the surrounding force to overturn the system.

On the other hand, the faction of the victor would work unceasingly to build their advantage and ruled in a way so that no further reversal would occur.

The new system would gradually turn tyrannical. One-sided. Unreasonable. Without even a shred of compassion.

In order to change such tendency, the [hero] would move.

The world was the repeat of such cycle.

It was a system that was backed by the instinct of living things, repeating eternally following the same process.

For Count Atismata, Lux was an existence that would become the bud of rebelling force.

Was Fugil lending him his strength until now for the sake of that?

"Lies..... There is contradiction in your words!"

"Hou."

When Lux wrung out his voice from his throat, Fugil tilted his head with a smile.

"You call that the salvation of the weak!? If you are going to kill all the people on one side of the system—the imperial family and the people related to them in order to change the system, doesn't that mean you are also cutting down the weak!? What I want is——"

The salvation of people who weren't joining hands with the empire by their own will, like Lux and Airi.

To save the imperial family and related people who were reluctantly obeying the policy of the Old Empire as many as possible.

That was the revolution that Lux wished for.

"That's right, that's why I'm saying that it's unnecessary. There isn't anybody like that other than you two. Someone who possess even a sliver of compassion towards the people at the corner of their heart, there is already no one like that in this castle."

".....-!?"

Lux went speechless towards that sentence which he never even imagined.

Lux's mind had also considered such thinking vaguely.

In the first place there wasn't even a single imperial family or related person who lent their ear to his grandfather's admonition that objected to the despotic administration of the empire. There was also no one who compromised with Lux.

After that, Lux showed his talent as a Drag-Knight and advised the emperor and the others about bettering the standings of the people, but he only got alienated from doing that.

Inside this imperial palace that was rotten until the root, it was Fugil alone who was listening to him.

"You should know already from your experience. Once someone got totally stained by authority, they won't change their mind. But you were scared of directly making a move by yourself. You were taking even special [what if] circumstances into account because you were scared. You were scared of sacrificing someone else for the sake of your objective."

"Kuh.....!"

Lux gritted his teeth when Fugil hit the nail on the head.

Even so he struck down the rebuttal that was welling up inside him.

"You cannot know that for sure! Perhaps they were just scared to receive cold treatment like me in the castle that was ruled by the emperor(father)!"

"That's right. Those people can change their stance to whatever for their own convenience based only on the situation at that time. What will happen if such fools hold authority in replacement of the previous authority? In the end it will only be a repeat of the same. After all if they have even a shred of compassion for the people, they should have already lent a hand to you."

"That is——"

His argument was cut down and Lux lost any words to reply back.

It was the truth.

Lux was abandoned by the Old Empire, by the populace.

Even when he tried to fight, he couldn't save anybody.

Until Fugil who he thought as his elder brother called out to him, he couldn't save anything, not a single thing, not a single person.

There was no one in this castle who tried to extend a helping hand to Lux.

—

"——Fugil, the emperor and the royal family inside the castle will escape if you don't hurry. It's possible to pursue them, but if they cause an event that is too complicated, it will cause some hindrances to the history revision."

"Yeah, you're right Arshalia."

An emotionless voice suddenly came from somewhere.

Behind the castle that was blazing up in flame, a gigantic chalk white Drag-Ride was towering in the sky.

"Arshalia.....?"

"——That's right. The wise woman who completed the mechanism called Avalon. The Sacred Eclipse that she created can perceive, analyze, and project a human's heart. That information is sent to the Automata to weigh the human's heart."

Fugil pointed his Sword Device high to the sky along with a cold smile.

It was a sword with really similar shape to Bahamut.

The switch on its handle was pressed, and it started up by the command from mind control operation.

Right after that, the gigantic chalk white Drag-Ride wriggled, and the ring on its back moved.

—

【——It's impossible to get outside from inside a building by one's own will.】

—

"——!?"

The robotic voice of the Automata Arshalia was sent directly into Lux's brain.

Right after that, faint light enveloped the whole area of the imperial capital.

Fugil who was watching it smiled fearlessly and took a stance with Bahamut's great sword.

"Endless——now that the world's rule is changed, they won't be able to escape. Then let me ask for the last time. Lux——become the next king. Capture the Emperor, the imperial family, and the vassals remaining inside the castle right now and execute them. You will replace them as an ideal new ruler and bring about the balance."

Fugil smiled at Lux persuasively.

It was a deeply affectionate gentle expression, just like the time when he first asked Lux about his opinion.

"Show me your resolve, Lux. The only factor that you are lacking to be a ruler——when you grasp it, I will recognize you as the new core of history to replace Count Atismata."

"I, I——"

Discord was spreading within Lux's chest.

Would he commit crime here by laying down his hand on the emperor and the people related to him?

If he did that, he would obtain what he wished for.

A peaceful country without irrational discrimination and suffering.

A life without the one-sided rule of the influential people.

He would obtain a happy world where Airi and Philuffy's safety was secure.

(I will finally, get saved..... The people of this country too, if I choose this then)

The people would recognize and love him as the hero who destroyed the absolute evil Arcadia Empire.

"You only need to do that. You don't need to know about my mission. If you know then you will endlessly seek it, that is just human. Therefore after you consent, I will erase all your memory about this. You just need to have resolve."

Fugil's words tickled his ears.

It was a refined and pleasant tone that was fitting of royalty.

"Now, answer me my wise younger brother. What do you wish from here on?"

Lux told his answer towards the man who he idolized as an elder brother.

Part 3

And then now—Lux returned to his senses above the rubble.

"U, uu.....!"

When he coughed, saliva that was slightly mixed with blood came out.

Perhaps the inside of his mouth got cut, but his whole body couldn't feel anything as though his nerves were burned off by intense pain.

Far ahead of his gaze, Aeril and the Seven Dragon Paladins other than Singlen were lined up. They were on their guard against Fugil who he couldn't see from his position.

—

【—Those who aren't wearing Drag-Rides and their movements won't be perceived in this world】

—

Ouroboros's Divine Raiment, Endless changed the world's rule within the radius of a hundred kl.

That was to say, everyone couldn't catch sight of Fugil's figure and they lost sight of him.

If they tried to react by launching a wide range attack, Fugil would surely escape to another space using Zero One only at that moment.

Conversely right now the best plan was for everyone to strengthen their barrier and act vigilantly so they wouldn't be attacked by the unarmored Fugil using his Sword Device.

".....-!"

Magialca and the others were listening to Fugil's story during a moment that was less than a few minutes.

The hero's mission, the true function of Avalon and Sacred Eclipse.

Everyone was intentionally staying quiet without interjecting was in order to grasp the effective time of Endless.

But, the territory of seven colored light showed no sign at all of vanishing.

Everyone was gradually comprehending that for the activation time to be this long meant that they had to fight indefinitely within the area where the world's rule was set up by Fugil.

".....Just as I said. I have no intention to fight you all. Right now there is no one among you who possesses the qualification as king to become the core of fate. Thus you can forget the truth of Avalon, wait for the world's reconfiguration, and make your choice within the new history."

The voice of the unseen Fugil resounded through the site of the destroyed old castle.

This was the third time Fugil recommended for them to just retreat without fighting and he would let them go, however Greifer snorted.

"Hah, I just listened to a stupid long-winded story."

He took a stance of holding Tail Blade with both hands in front of him and made a belligerent smile.

"An ally of the weak? Bringing balance to the world? Are you still half-asleep, you asshole. You are assuming that the Automata or Sacred Eclipse are absolutely correct as the basis of what you are doing, right? In the end, what you are doing is——"

"Only forcing the result of your favorite fortuneteller to other people. In other words, it's only something like that isn't it?"

When Greifer was going to continue his words, Mel who was standing in the middle cut in with her mutter.

Greifer who got interrupted turned an annoyed gaze at her.

"Oi you..... Don't copy other people's lines....."

"Buut, I'm also of the same opinion with the little child here. I'm already tired of hearing that kind of nonsense."

This time it was Rosa who was on the ground who made a fearless smile.

"It's comfortable to listen to the orders of someone who claimed [I'm right] like that you know? But there is no path ahead of blind belief. That is simply throwing away everything from yourself."

"Though right now it feels like you are blindly believing Lux though. Well, it doesn't matter."

Right beside her Soffice spoke the same opinion with her expressionless face.

"Saving the weak and keeping the balance. Giving a chance to those with the will to fight to reverse the situation. Certainly that might be a good thing, but—"

Soffice's emotionless purplish red pupils boiled up with spirit and she spoke her next words.

"It's selfish of you to cast them away when they aren't moving just like you want. You never talk of your aim while saving and guiding people—and then killing them, right?"

"I don't know whether Listelka-neesan and Hayes were right or not."

Aeril spoke to the unseen Fugil as though she had been waiting for her turn.

"But, my answer is different. I betrayed even my sisters who were connected to me by blood for the sake of what I think is right. Perhaps I have no qualification at all to criticize you. But——"

Saying that, she swung her Breath Whip and made the lengthily stretching whip to move within the radius of several dozens ml.

She was searching for the position of the unseen and unarmored Fugil while preparing for the battle.

That action displayed Aeryl's will.

"I will believe in my own choice. I reject you in order to accomplish my own wish. Fugil, I cannot believe in you and Sacred Eclipse."

Magialca who saw that concluded at the end with her usual wicked smile.

"—That's how it is. How long are you going to hide, hero-dono. Are you planning to stay still until the time runs out?"

".....Fuh"

Fugil whose figure couldn't be seen using Endless's power let out a snicker.

"It doesn't matter whether you believe or not. In the first place I didn't think that you would listen just from me telling you this story. There is nothing that all of you can do."

"What, now you are acting like a poor loser after finally giving that talk? Or perhaps, you have that much confidence in that Sacred Eclipse? Is that monster which was greedily devouring people everywhere really a device that gives salvation to humans? You are hiding something aren't you?"

"....."

Fugil stayed silent towards that.

There wasn't even a sound of breathing to reply to Magialca.

"It seems you are seriously trying to buy time huh. Is it less than five more minutes? We know the location of Avalon's control room. I wonder what will happen if we attack there while you are hiding."

When Magialca said that with an evil smile, Aeryl gasped.

"What do you mean, Captain Magialca?"

"I'll speak shortly because there is no time. Why did this guy intentionally come out? In the first place if we cannot interfere with Avalon further than this, he simply needs to wait inside. In other words—"

"You meean there was necessity to attract attention. That underground place that is emitting the pillar of light. If everyone attacks there, will we be able to destroy the control room's wall and hinder the system?"

"A half-baked attack surely won't work. At the very least it's possible for us. That's why you are holding us back like this. Am I wrong hero-dono?"

"....."

KIIN!

In that instant, one of Jormundgandr's armored arm—the extra-large Cannon roared.

Magialca seemed to have worked out a plan in the middle of that conversation. She was already gathering energy.

"If you won't answer then I'll give it a try myself! Fugil Arcadia!"

And then, an extremely thick light was fired along with a roar.

The torrent of high heat and shockwave pierced through the atmosphere and gouged out the remaining rubbles and ground.

Jormundgandr's bombardment aimed at a spot a few hundred ml ahead, however it was erased before it hit the targeted spot.

"It's averted with Zero One!? As I thought it's there! Avalon can be destroyed!"

Aeril yelled, at the same time the remaining members started moving simultaneously.

Each of them activated their respective special armaments in order to concentrate their attack. It was then that a voice came.

—

"—Come from the tower of double helix. Spin all creation of infinitude that become zero, and establish the law of heaven and earth's creation. Artifact – Ouroboros!"

—

"—!?"

Right after the passcode that Fugil recited was heard, dazzling light enveloped the area.

The particle of light that gathered when the Drag-Ride was transferred was dazzling the eyes because its amount was in a different league than normal.

"Even if my sight is blinded, I know the direction. —HAAH!"

After that Rosa, Mel and Soffice also fired their Cannons towards the ground that was hiding the central.

But, the bombardment with maximum output clashed with a similar shockwave and it got neutralized.

"Captain Magialca's bombardment that was made to disappear using Zero One is used here!?"

The blast from the aftermath of two bombardments colliding with each other caused Aeril to groan.

The other members also stopped moving. It was at that instant that Fugil's voice resounded.

"Connect – On."

GOGOGOGOGO!, a dull and heavy metallic sound reverberated. Then a figure appeared when the dust cleared.

Over there was Fugil who was equipping Bahamut once more and standing behind him was a chalk white castle—no, a super dreadnought class Drag-Ride which embodied a majestic appearance that towered to the sky was standing tall along with a mechanical ring on its back.

The silver multifold armor without any cloudiness on its surface.

Countless cannon muzzles that were placed at every part.

This Drag-Ride didn't function as armor. Its very existence was moving as a single fortress.

At the center of its enormous head that possessed a streamline shape, there was a cockpit that was covered by reinforced glass in hemisphere shape. An Automata was sitting there.

"That is, Ouroboros.....!?"

"Big..... Even more than any Divine Drag-Ride I have seen until now....., it's like, a Ruin itself."

Mel who saw that muttered, and Soffice also blinked in surprise.

"In fact it's also a Ruin. It's the other half of the Zero Ruin Avalon, an Artifact(Transforming Drag-Ride). It was specially made to be a Drag-Ride and also a Ruin."

Aeril who heard them talked with a low voice while sweating from her forehead.

The summit that governed the seven Ruins, the Zero.

Its very existence was a castle that was installed with every kind of mechanism, at the same time it was the greatest and strongest weapon.

It was written in the information that Aeryl obtained from the Moon's archive, that it was the last Artifact.

But, the bottomless terror of Ouroboros's main body wasn't exposed in the document.

"Let's.....fight just for a bit. Until the next awakening arrives."

"Uh!?"

Fugil unsheathed Ouroboros's Sword Device.

Right after that, the gigantic dragon that was like a fortress deployed behind him moved. The five fingers of that enormous arm were held out above Bahamut.

[Charge Blast – On(Strengthening Support – Start)]

A robotic voice was emitted from Ouroboros.

There was no time to pay attention to recognize that it was the voice of Avalon's Automata, Arshalia.

The enormous armor of Ouroboros that looked like it was the combination of several hundred Drag-Rides shined. Energy surged like a volcano eruption and poured down on Bahamut.

Aeryl who saw that spontaneously doubted her own eyes.

"This is.....the power of support strengthening just like Drake!? But, the power output is just too different!?"

If it was a general purpose Drag-Ride Drake, the maximum degree of strengthening was about 1,25 times. If it was EX Drake, the other Drag-Ride's specs could be increased until around 1,5 times.

But, the amount of the emitted energy that was transferred before their eyes was different in scale.

The support ability that was a basic function of a special equipment type in this case possessed a power in the level of a Divine Raiment of another Drag-Ride.

"—Reload on Fire."

The instant Aeryl felt a shudder, the Bahamut that Fugil wore was enveloped in ominous light.

Crimson radiance was emitted from the jet black armor.

Most likely it possessed a might that far excelled the Divine Raiment when it was activated normally.

If for example Fugil's time was compressed and strengthened until a few tenth of the normal, his movement after that would be in a speed that ordinary person wouldn't be able to react to.

Not to mention defending, they wouldn't even make it in time to escape. They would get easily pursued and crushed.

At that time when everyone froze after sensing the omen of destruction, a single Divine Drag-Ride flew with explosive speed and charged towards Fugil.

"Greifer!?"

After a short pause, Aeryl who noticed that spontaneously yelled.

While everyone was delayed for an instant at their initial response due to their wariness towards Ouroboros, it was only Greifer who moved following his instinct like a wild animal to close his distance with Fugil instead.

The period of the first five seconds when the compression strengthening was activated.

If it was Fugil's own time that became the target of the Divine Raiment, his time would be drastically decelerated until it felt like he was stopping still.

If it was used for things other than time acceleration, then it wouldn't be a problem even if it was used for strengthening. Aeryl almost thought that Greifer was making such calculation, but she noticed that wasn't it.

The man called Greifer who Aeryl knew never really spend his time to form tactics.

It wasn't that he had shallow thinking, but that he would unconsciously pick the very best plan and carry it out.

It wasn't a logic that could be expressed in words, he was sniffing out the chance of victory by intuition.

"But, if he use Zero One again and escapes——"

Mel knitted her eyebrows while seeing Greifer slashing at Fugil's Bahamut.

"There is nothing to fear! If Fugil used Reload on Fire for time acceleration, then that's impossible! More importantly move into offense!"

But, Magialca immediately raised a commanding voice from behind.

If Fugil applied the compression strengthening of time on his own time, even activating Zero One using mind control operation that originally only needed a second would be drastically decelerated until dozens of seconds.

Therefore, there was no worry of Fugil escaping in the first five seconds—that was Magialca's judgment.

Greifer and Magialca's answer was the best at this point of time.

However, the enemy's strength far surpassed that.

[——Perish.]

A single word from the Automata.

Arshalia seemed to be receiving commands from mind control operation simultaneously. She muttered and the silver super gigantic Drag-Ride——Ouroboros moved.

That armored arm was tightly grasping a steel tower and took a stance of drawing it backward as though it was a weapon.

——No, it wasn't a steel tower or anything.

The mass of steel would tower so high if it was put on the ground that they would need to look up to the sky to watch it in its entirety. It was a Blade that was made from Mythrildite.

It was a weapon that wasn't any different from the Blade that a general purpose Drag-Ride would have, but the mass was just too different.

That incomparable pressure caused the approaching Seven Dragon Paladins to hold their breath. In that instant, the world was split.

——*GOO-!*

".....Fast-!?"

Ouroboros's Blade was swung in a sweeping motion with a sharpness that even the yelling Mel wouldn't be able to see if it wasn't so big.

Everyone was prepared for death toward the attack that far surpassed their imagination, but that slash tilted only slightly and deviated.

"—Kuh! AAA!"

The gigantic Blade that was swung with terrific speed left behind raging wind and shockwave in its wake.

Just with that the remaining rampart was smashed and rubble was sent flying.

If the slash's trajectory wasn't averted by Mahapurana that Soffice reflexively activated, several of them would definitely have gotten killed.

And then although they avoided a direct hit, the attack of the Seven Dragon Paladins was completely stopped.

But—

"Greifer.....don't tell me!?"

Greifer who was an instant faster slipped through the lethal slash that was unleashed by the main body and dived into the chest of Ouroboros that was like a fortress.

His aim wasn't the Artifact at the rear, but Bahamut that was taking position right in front of it.

Because of the hugeness of Ouroboros's main body, the Blade's threat could be avoided if one could approach until a certain distance.

Aeril opened her eyes wide in astonishment. Right after that, the countless cannon muzzles that were placed on its stomach part fired blue beams of light simultaneously.

—*KIIN.*

The dozens, no, hundreds of lasers that were fired from the armor attacked to shoot through Greifer.

But, the beams that came fiercely from almost every direction were dispersed without reaching Greifer.

The destructive power was remarkably damped and reduced until a level that could be negated by the barrier.

It was the special armament of Cuelebre that Greifer was wearing, Mist Cypher.

The mist of metal pieces that were scattered around as smokescreen dispersed the light energy and weakened it.

"That's naïve yeah? Your thinking that I can be stopped after allowing me to get this close that is!"

Greifer slipped through two interception attacks that were at the level of bringing instant death and got close to Fugil.

The Tail Blade that was shaped like a snake's stomach changed shape like a whip and unleashed a slash that drew spiraling trajectory.

It hit at Bahamut's armor from the shoulder toward the stomach with a momentum to bisect the pilot altogether—but it was repelled.

".....-!? What the hell is this hardness!?"

Greifer shuddered earlier than the Seven Dragon Paladins who were watching that from afar.

He should have accelerated enough and transmitted the energy through his sword too.

His prediction that Fugil was super decelerating his own time using Reload on Fire was on the spot, the enemy's Bahamut also couldn't deal with the attack. The barrier wasn't even deployed.

(And yet, why!?)

Greifer was bewildered for only two seconds. During that time an emotionless voice poured down from the head part of Ouroboros far above.

[The surface of the armor and the pilot suit are always formed from a defensive membrane that is similar with barrier.]

The Automata Arshalia who was piloting Ouroboros was moving by Fugil's mind control operation.

Even after hearing the answer from her, Greifer was unable to understand the meaning immediately.

Certainly the armor's surface and the pilot suit had energy that was similar to a Drag-Ride's barrier streaming through them. The energy was always protecting the pilot automatically.

But, if it was compared with the barrier that was normally generated, the defensive power was nothing more than a fragment.

In short it was simply a mere consolation. Till the end it was nothing more than an auxiliary defense to add a bit more to the generated barrier, because of that the attacking side and the defending side didn't count it at all.

But—even that flimsy defense membrane was increased in toughness until dozens of times through the Charge Blast just now.

"You miscalculated, stray dog. The one you are facing is this hero of origin you know?"

Finally five seconds passed since the activation of Reload on Fire. In front of him Fugil started to move.

However, Greifer had activated Cuelebre's Divine Raiment just a little bit ago.

"—Photon Dive!"

The Divine Raiment of invincibility that would deflect all attacks.

Greifer was preparing the stance of interception right before the later five seconds of Reload on Fire began.

Like this no matter how many dozens of times Fugil was accelerated and dealt consecutive attacks on him, he would be able to endure it without getting harmed.

But, Fugil kept smiling and slowly took off his gaze from Greifer and glared at Magialca and the others who were 200 ml away from them.

".....-!? No way in hell I'll let you!"

The speed of Fugil who had compression strengthening from Reload on Fire applied on him wasn't as much as Greifer expected.

If he attacked before he could break out from this area that was enveloped by Mist Cypher, it should be possible to hold him back even if only slightly.

Thinking so he immediately switched into offense. In that instant, his spine froze with a chill.

".....Fuh"

With a smile Fugil pushed his great sword against Greifer's armor.

—No.

He had predicted the direction Greifer would move at and placed his sword there beforehand.

Photon Dive was a Divine Raiment that deflected only attacks that rushed towards the user within the defined speed.

That was to say, the user would receive the external influence if the user moved closer by his own accord towards a weapon until it touched him and then strength was poured to that weapon from zero distance.

It was the winning method that Krulcifer once used during the All-Dragon Battle. Greifer was lured into that.

Fugil pretended that he would go to attack the others in order to bring down Greifer.

(This man, he calculated until this far in just that instant!)

Completely reading through the preliminary movement of an enemy's attack and then using Reload on Fire to unleash consecutive attacks in godspeed, the Quick Shot.

The tactic using Bahamut that Lux was specialized at was executed in an even higher dimension by Fugil.

GA, GIGII-!

Cuelebre's tough armor was pressed and cut by the blade that was filled with energy in the state of clinging on its frame.

Originally just pressing wouldn't be really effective because it would be hard to obtain cutting power through the friction from that.

Even with that handicap, the destructive power was still so overwhelming and brought down Greifer and Cuelebre.

"GU, OOooOOOOH.....!"

The slash that was unleashed from zero distance pierced the armor and broke Greifer's ribs. Fresh blood surged out from his mouth.

(This way of cutting is simply using brute force! Just by making the Blade touch and moving only the joints of his Drag-Ride, the propulsive power of the Force Core is totally transmitted to me!)

Even from the state of the blade clinging at zero distance, power was applied to the touching part by moving the rest of the body which accomplished a slash that normally should be impossible.

An instant after Greifer was starting to freefall, Rosa's bombardment was fired towards Fugil.

Gorynych that was fused with more than ten Drag-Rides using the Divine Raiment Tartaros Frame was firing energy from its whole gunport, but it didn't even serve to hold Fugil back. He slipped through all the attacks and closed the distance.

".....He is weaving through the gaps of that bombardment!? No way!"

Originally it should be impossible to do something like dodging a bombing that covered the whole surface of the field of vision, but Fugil's Bahamut that was accelerated until dozens of times allowed him to make his way through even that and he drew near to in front of Rosa.

And then, the energy that had been gathered until the arrival spot was released in a super powered slash.

"Gah.....!"

There was no special technique at all, it was just a Blade that was swung with maximum energy filling it.

That single attack half destroyed Gorynych's armor and fresh blood spilled out from Rosa's mouth.

"Rosa-!"

Next Fugil's gaze moved towards the yelling Mel and Ddraig Gwiber.

Without delay Bahamut swung its great sword toward Mel who was in range, but the sword's tip cut empty air.

"Dual Shift.....you control the density of the atmosphere using difference in temperature to take away the sense of distance using sight is it?"

"Correct. But, that's not all. —Eat this!"

Bahamut's armor was thinly frozen at the right timing when the accelerated state was over.

It was the freezing ability using Dual Shift's temperature control.

Till the end it was only to the degree of thinly freezing the armor surface, but Mel swung down her battleaxe at the opening when Fugil's movement was restrained—even faster than that, Ddraig Gwiber's armor was smashed with a slash and Mel was sent flying right to the side.

"——!?"

Fugil sent instruction to Arshalia using mind control operation and moved Ouroboros that was towering at the back.

The super gigantic Blade that was like an iron tower dealt a slash that brought down Mel without giving her any time to notice.

The high speed slash that came from outside her field of vision gave Mel no way to perceive it when she was concentrating at Fugil.

"How, can this be.....!"

"Something like that, is cheating."

Aeril who was still safe gritted her teeth, while Soffice was staring dumbfounded at what happened.

The Seven Dragon Paladins who were the representatives of each country should have fought to the best of their ability.

Regardless of that, the result that came back to them was this overwhelming difference.

Fugil who was wearing Bahamut using Ouroboros's special armament Infinity obtained overwhelming offense and defense ability using the Charge Blast.

At the same time Ouroboros's main body that was moved by Arshalia was an autonomous fortress in itself. It possessed power that surpassed the Ruin Gigas.

They had to fight these two enemies that possessed unprecedented threat at the same time.

The remaining people who could still fight on their side were only Magialca, Aeril, and then Soffice.

Within the interval of several seconds when their thoughts were halted and they were unable to find any breakthrough method, Fugil activated his Divine Raiment once more.

"—Reload on Fire."

Their whole field of vision was completely blanketed by intense crimson flash.

What became the Divine Raiment's next target was the main body of Ouroboros behind Fugil.

The Charge Blast that was given to Bahamut had run out, so this time's Reload on Fire should apply compression strengthening of only several times, but whether it would be used for time acceleration or power amplification, in five more seconds a preposterous attack would rain down on them.

"So it's like that....."

Magialca was watching that while whispering in admiration.

"Consecutive activation of Reload on Fire that is mutually used for offense and defense. That is undoubtedly that guy's tactic of certain victory."

In case when the Divine Raiment was strengthening Bahamut itself, Arshalia would order Ouroboros's main body ahead to protect Fugil.

Another way was for the compression strengthening to be applied to Ouroboros's main body. Fugil would attack the enemy at the first five seconds to hold them back.

"The weak point of Reload on Fire that originally is accompanied with risk is covered, and five seconds later an overwhelming attack power will annihilate the enemy. That is the fighting style of this guy....."

"Indeed. But what are you planning to do about it, oh notorious merchant. The time for negotiations has already passed you know?"

"Hah! This brat really does bark loudly! I'm going to make you bawl out your tears after this!"

The countdown of the remaining five seconds due to Fugil was already approaching.

If the attack that had been compressed and strengthened started as it is, Magialca and the others would surely get done in altogether too.

In order to prevent that, Aeryl and Soffice quickly retreated and took shelter behind the deployed Jormundgandr.

It was an installed type, but it was like a fortress that possessed excellent offensive and defensive power that far surpassed a normal Drag-Ride. It took a stance to protect the two's safety while preparing to switch into offense.

(But, will it be able to endure to the end? Against the attack of that gigantic Artifact——)

Aeryl didn't say it out loud, but she was harboring such fear inside her heart.

Magialca's Jormundgandr was also really big, but Ouroboros was even bigger than that by two sizes difference.

Above all else, depending on what Reload on Fire compressed and strengthened, even Jormundgandr's defense would surely get broken through easily.

[Soffice! Aeryl! Activate your Divine Raiment when I say so. We will die if we make even a single mistake after this!]

Magialca spoke tensely through the Dragon Voice. A second later, Fugil's Bahamut charged towards them.

"Fast——! But, this time I can follow him with my eyes!"

Fugil flew towardd them with a sharp rush and then he let out a thrust with his great sword. In response Magialca struck with Jormundgandr's fist. But before it landed, Fugil's figure vanished.

"Zero One!? He is using it now!?"

He charged forward personally to attract their attention and in that opening he made the five seconds period of Reload on Fire to progress without hindrance.

After that he erased his own figure with the aim of launching all out bombardment from all the gunports of Ouroboros at the back.

"This is, Cannon.....? No, with such power——"

The huge Cannon that Jormundgandr was equipped with.

Several large cannons that rivaled or even surpassed that appeared from the opened stomach part of Ouroboros.

Light shined from all of them and the surface was completely covered with flame blast.

"Mahapurana!"

Soffice activated Vritra's trajectory control in full power to divert the torrent of the destructive energy.

But, because the range and power were too great, she couldn't block everything.

If Greifer and the others who were defeated earlier weren't sent flying to some distance away, they would get dragged into this and died.

"It seems the Reload on Fire this time compressed and strengthened the energy.....it's coming! Both of you!"

Magialca informed them inside the storm of power that was already difficult to describe.

At that instant, this time Ouroboros's main body drew near to them and along with Fugil who was wearing Bahamut they executed a simultaneous attack.

[Blade attack, launching.]

Ouroboros swung down the large sword that was like a steel tower and split apart the rising flame.

The seven large arms that composed Jormundgandr blocked it, and then the attack was parried away using the back of the fist.

"Hou....."

Fugil let out a bit of an admiring sigh without a single change in his expression.

Originally, even Jormundgandr shouldn't be able to endure that single attack. It meant that it was the unique control skill of Magialca that skillfully blocked it. But——

"It doesn't end with one attack..... It's coming!"

The gigantic armored arm of Ourobors twisted back its wrist and slashed at them continuously with terrific momentum.

Every single attack was worthy to be called a calamity. It was a consecutive slash that could be called as the violence of mass.

But, the glint in Magialca's eyes wasn't weakening.

She ascertained the timing and angle where not even the slightest deviation would be forgiven and blocked and repelled the gigantic lump of steel.

She was seeing through the enemy's movement and defended like a martial art master through the medium of a huge Drag-Ride. At the side Aeryl and Soffice were also exchanging attack with Fugil's Bahamut.

The Breath Whip ran freely from all directions to strike at Fugil from every way.

Fugil was repelling that using the tip of his Blade while drawing near toward Aeryl and Zahhak.

"—I don't get it. What are you using your Brain Hack for since some time ago? Why am I able to perceive Ouroboros? Why aren't you making me to forget it?"

Fugil unleashed a slash that sharply aimed at a vital spot while questioning Aeryl with a dubious look.

Aeryl was able to barely dodge which was also thanks to the assistance of Soffice's Mahapurana.

But, the enemy was overwhelmingly superior in skill.

Due to the special armament—Chaos Brand's trait, it severed the energy that was running through the whip and like that it cut off the long whip.

Even though Aeryl should have been making attacks that was hard to dodge using her unique whip handling, she was unable to even entangle her whip around the enemy.

There was composure in Fugil's face despite his superiority.

It meant that he was putting up his guard towards Brain Hack, the Divine Raiment of Zahhak that Aeryl was wearing.

That Divine Raiment which erase only the designated memory of the target would allow the user to obtain powerful advantage depending on how it was

used.

Especially if it made Fugil to forget thing like the existence of Ouroboros or the Divine Raiment Endless, it would be the same like sealing one of his weapons.

But regardless of that, Aeryl wasn't doing that.

In other words, she was intentionally refraining from using her Divine Raiment to use it effectively at even better timing because she was thinking to overturn the situation with a single successful action. That was Fugil's guess.

Perhaps because of that Fugil's Bahamut wasn't attacking really proactively.

Zahhak's whip was already cut until its length was less than half. And the fringe of her armor was getting cut and smashed.

She was at this disadvantage even with the support of trajectory control from Soffice's Divine Raiment. The countdown of her limit was approaching near.

(Unbelievable. This kind of man has been existing even from more than a thousand years ago.....!)

It was fine and all that she had sworn to take revenge for her sisters, but it didn't seem like it could be turned into reality with Aeryl's strength.

In that case, she had to at least deal a hit as payback. No matter what, she had to stop this man's scheme——

"What a foolish thinking that is, taking revenge for fools who mistook their path."

Fugil spat out that line expressionlessly as though he had seen through Aeryl's resolve.

There was disappointment, disdain, and then hollow scorn there.

"——!?"

Instantly Aeryl's Breath Whip that was filled with her anger twined around Bahamut's armor.

The enemy's movement was sealed, at the same time she drew out a Blade using her empty armored arm and lunged to stab his chest with the sword

tip—but.

KINN!

The sound of cutting through air that pierced the eardrum.

Before the attack landed, Zahhak's Blade was snapped with a strike.

—Quick Draw.

With the perfect harmonization of mind control operation and body control operation, an action of launching just a single attack in super godspeed could be realized.

Aeril too knew that it was one of the three great hidden techniques that Lux invented.

(.....! Did he imitate the hidden technique that Lux-kun invented!? Or else—)

Did he guide Lux from the beginning to learn it? Such thinking passed through the back of her mind.

"Farewell."

"—Aeril-!"

Soffice immediately moved to protect her, but she wouldn't make it in time.

In exchange Magialca's voice quietly resounded right from the side.

She had Ouroboros showering her with raging attacks from its super gigantic Blade and Cannon which destroyed two of her seven armored arms, even so her face was still keeping her confident smile.

"Sorry to make you wait Aeril. The preparation is finished! Eat this—Hell Tempest!"

Magialca blocked the Blade that was swung down with Jormundgandr's armored arms and she yelled loudly.

At the same time a huge magic circle was deployed behind her Drag-Ride and it was enveloped in intense radiance.

Jormundgandr's Divine Raiment, Hell Tempest was an ability to suck a part of the damage from the opponent and converted it into its own attack energy.

Magialca was able to endure through the Blade and Cannon of Fugil's Ouroboros wasn't just because of her skill, but also because of this Divine Raiment.

And then, the enemy had approached until the firing range and she was observing for a chance to deal lethal damage.

For the moment when Jormundgandr had stocked the maximum amount of energy it could stock and fired it.

But—

"—Zero One."

The special armament was activated without delay toward the torrent of overwhelming energy that was approaching from the front.

It wasn't activated to make Fugil himself vanished(turned off), but it was to release the bombardment of Jormungandr that was stolen before to neutralize the current attack of Magialca.

But— right after Fugil did the mind control operation to do that, the voice of the Automata Arshalia came from the head part of Ouroboros that existed above him.

"It's impossible master. Currently there is no existing object or energy that is being turned off by Zero One."

"—!? So, that's i....."

[So that's it] Before he could finish whispering that, Bahamut was swallowed by the extremely thick beam.

The boundless shockwave and raging wave of high heat were fired out with a roar.

It sent flying not just Bahamut that Fugil was wearing, but even Ouroboros behind him far to the back.

Even the broken rubbles and the remaining rampart were blasted away. The visibility in the ruins became much clearer.

"Haa, haa.....! Looks like I somehow made it in time there....."

As expected even Magialca was running out of breath and she wiped the sweat on her forehead with the back of her hand.

Aeril and Soffice who got their nerves similarly worn down also let out a long sigh and relaxed their tension.

How did a Drag-Knight at Fugil's level commit a blunder when operating Zero One?

He gave a command to turn the on state and release the content when originally in that timing he had to make the attack vanished into off state.

That was exactly the trap that Aeril laid out.

"It's amazing how you thought up such idea, Aeril."

"Even like this my only specialty is in deceiving after all. It's not something I can boast about though."

Aeril smiled wryly at Soffice's praise.

If she made Fugil forgot about the main body of Ouroboros or the special armament like Zero One or Infinity, then certainly it would make the battle situation easier temporarily.

But, even just Fugil and Bahamut were powerful enough. There would be no change for the better if they simply focused on defense.

In order to change that into a method to decisively reverse the situation, Aeril devised a plan.

The tactic she spoke to Magialca through Dragon Voice was to erase Fugil's memory that he had already used Zero One's on state.

In other words Fugil was under the impression that the bombardment of Jormundgandr that he temporarily stored in the previous battle was still being stocked by Zero One.

Therefore—

Thanks to that, the enemy's defensive measure ended up in vain and the attack with maximum output that Jormundgandr possessed, Hell Tempest, managed to hit directly.

As expected even Ouroboros that possessed a mass at the scale of a fortress surely wouldn't get away unscathed from it.

"Don't let your guard down..... Let's finish off that guy without delay. Grasp his position using radar. I'll bombard Avalon's central and stop it!"

"Yes!"

"I'm already really tired but.....roger."

Aeril and Soffice nodded at Magialca's instruction and they respectively flew forward.

They were liberated from the extreme tension and exhaustion suddenly filled them to the brim due to the backlash after struggling through the point between life and death, even so they kept hanging on to their consciousness.

They had only seized the advantage, it didn't mean that they had defeated Fugil.

They controlled their impatience and squeezed out their last bits of strength.

Their destination was 300 ml ahead where Fugil and Ouroboros were sent flying.

When Aeril and Soffice approached near to confirm the state of damage to Ouroboros that was lying down face up on a mountain of crumbling rubble as its bed, the territory of light that was illuminating the area disappeared only to reappear again.

—

【—Destructive power other than direct attacks using mass will become ineffective.】

—

The voice of the Automata was audible inside their brains.

The instant Aeril and Soffice's body was pierced through by a shudder, impact also ran through their whole body.

".....Gah!?"

"Ih.....!"

Their barrier was instantly broken through and their solid armor was pulverized by a flash of a blade.

After receiving direct hits, the two of them noticed a certain fact for the first time.

That Fugil along with Bahamut were inserted into Ouroboros's chest part and they combined, and he unleashed that terrific slash like that.

(Quick Draw!? The Blade of Ouroboros's main body was—!)

Until now Ouroboros wasn't directly worn by Fugil. It was moving autonomously through Arshalia.

When Fugil along with Bahamut connected to it in the form of inserting himself into the chest part, it became possible to directly control it as though moving his own body.

It was an attack from a gigantic Blade that wasn't filled with energy, but the overwhelming weight that collided with them in godspeed had enough destructive power on its own.

Furthermore, due to Endless the world's rule was switched once more, neutralizing the bombardment from Magialca.

The broken armor of the rising up Ouroboros was regenerating with amazing speed.

It was the Drag-Ride repairing function of a special equipment type that Drake possessed.

With a speed that was incomparable to a general purpose Drag-Ride, supplementary armor was summoned and assembled into the damaged part.

Magialca who saw that dispelled the installation of Jormundgandr and quickly ran to the front.

"What kind of guy he is.....!? Even though he fully received that attack....."

What was terrifying was Fugil's discernment and physical ability.

When taken by surprise, a human would need a moment to switch their feelings.

But Fugil, despite being in the middle of receiving great damage, his concentration was as though it was completely undisturbed and he executed the best plan he could as though it was only natural.

It was unclear whether it was his resolve, pride, or perhaps his great cause that was pushing him on.

But that strength which surpassed anyone Magialca had seen until now allowed him to counterattack even in such situation.

One other shocking point was how the world's rule from the Endless that Fugil reactivated had two meanings.

First, it took into consideration the tactics for the battle right after. If it was Ouroboros that possessed overwhelming weight and mass, it would be able to build up overwhelming superiority in a fight of pure physical attacks.

(But, that's not all! That guy also held me back at the same time!)

For Fugil, he wanted to avoid Avalon's central—the control room underground from getting targeted.

If it was Jormundgandr's bombardment, she would be able to aim at the control room from her current position, but it was too far if she wanted to launch a direct physical attack.

Therefore, Magialca was forced to temporarily dispel her armor and approach near in order to replace the position of Jormundgandr that couldn't move.

During that time, Fugil was able to buy time to rally himself.

He repaired the damaged Ouroboros super quickly and the flow of switching to offense was—

"He got me."

The eye glint of Fugil who was still several hundred ml away pierced through the approaching Magialca.

Right after that, the gigantic sword that Ouroboros wielded smashed the ground. Scattered rubble and flying off stone fragments attacked Magialca.

This was an attack that was accompanied with physical substance.

"Guh, ah.....!"

With superhuman reflexes and agility, Magialca immediately got down on the ground and avoided a direct hit.

But, she received the terrific impact that ran through the ground and she was thrown up to soar in the air.

The attack from a Drag-Ride that she received with her flesh body possessed a might that was almost lethal by itself.

Fractures entered the bones of that small body build. The skin split and fresh blood leaked out from the forehead.

"A merchant that is driven by greed is truly foolish. They will leap at the profit before their eyes without being able to see the whole situation and lose their riches. It would be better if someone who doesn't have the caliber of king doesn't approach near this Avalon."

The chest part of Ouroboros that had mostly finished its repair became a launching pad that shot out Fugil who was wearing Bahamut.

He was looking down on Aeryl and the Seven Dragon Paladins who ran out of strength and had collapsed on the ground from the sky.

It was less than ten minutes since the battle began.

During that time multiple layers of tactics and special moves were exchanged and at the end Fugil came out on top.

Everyone was already wounded all over. Their Drag-Rides were also dispelled. They were unable to even wear it again.

Only Magialca alone who was laying down while slowly lifting up her upper body. She raised her blood soaked face in wordless opposition.

"The preparation for the revision will finish soon. The time was extended because the energy is slightly diverted for this battle, but there is no problem. Surely Sacred Eclipse will newly select the king who will bring about the equilibrium called peace into this world. You can keep lying down there and wait. No——"

Fugil who was talking paused and he averted his gaze from Magialca and the others to the side.

"There is no need to choose. That person is right here, Fugil. The person who you guided to be worthy for the seat of the new king."

"Guh.....you, are.....?"

A man's coated figure that was standing there was reflected on the eyes of Magialca that were empty from blood loss and exhaustion.

The vice captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins whose fight with Lux ended in a draw where they both struck each other and concealed his figure until now.

The Blue Tyrant of the Blackend Kingdom—Singlen Shelbrit was standing there.

Part 4

GOGON, GOGON..... The sound reverberated.

The working sounds of massive mechanisms were resounding through the site of the old fortress that already had no more traces of its original appearance.

The control room that governed the mechanism of Avalon—the central was sending up faint pillar of light from underground, showing its position.

Fugil who was wearing Bahamut descended to a little bit in the front of the Artifact that was towering to the sky.

Before him Singlen drew out his Sword Device and recited the passcode.

"—Origin ocean, whirl powerfully to the critical point. Illuminate the heaven and bring down the judgment of divine will, Leviathan."

Particles of light converged and formed the shape of a weapon that was modeled after a dragon.

"Connect – On."

Singlen wore the huge blue armor and directed a fearless smile at Fugil.

"We have faced each other at the meeting with the Lords, but it has been ten years since we talked directly like this isn't it, hero-dono."

".....What are you coming here for? No, did you come to receive it? The reward for the task that I granted to you ten years ago."

"Reward for.....a task, you say?"

Magialca knitted her eyebrows and interrupted the baffling conversation of the two.

But, Fugil and Singlen didn't even give her a glance and continued talking.

"—Ten years ago. You followed my guidance and obtained the seat of general at the time. But, once you obtained repose for yourself, you lost interest to everything and abandoned that position, despite possessing the disposition and strength to reform the country."

—

—That was something that once happened in Blackend Kingdom.

Singlen Shelbrit was a child of a concubine of a debauched feudal lord.

He was from a prestigious family that was a relative of the royal family, a house that had produced knights for generations.

Regardless of the family pedigree that had an ancient and honorable origin from the beginning, his father, a count, lived in depravity. Singlen and his big sister were treated coldly by their relatives since their childhood.

But, Singlen possessed an extraordinary talent.

His fighting skill, tactical mind, his wisdom to outwit other people and climb to the top in the world of authority were outstanding.

Despite that, he simply didn't try to use it.

It wasn't because Singlen was being considerate of his relatives, he was merely not considering them his enemies.

He was only disliking leaping into the vortex of a dispute between fools and interacting with them.

And then—an incident occurred.

His sister Marche received violence from their relatives and lost her eyesight. With that incident as the trigger, Singlen urged the serfs and eradicated the whole family of the count.

After that, Fugil appeared at where he was staying together with his elder sister and showed him the path of a Drag-Knight.

—

[This country is getting polluted. If you don't become the core to bring about equilibrium to this country, one day the stagnation will surely creep up to you too.]

—

At that time Fugil didn't introduce himself and only exchanged words with him.

Singlen understood the meaning of what Fugil was saying, but he didn't have any intention of getting as far as involved with the government of the

kingdom.

He simply distinguished himself as a Drag-Knight and climbed to the top until he became the general of the kingdom—when the surrounding influential people were starting to ostracize him, he retired in the form of intentionally getting driven out.

He knew that the whole country was decaying, but he didn't have any intention of correcting it himself.

He began spending a quiet life with his elder sister, but even that didn't continue for long.

The vassals who feared Singlen's strength and intelligence for trickery secretly arranged for his territory to be attacked. His blind sister was tortured and killed in the end.

At the same time Singlen too was almost assassinated. When he was dying, Sacred Eclipse appeared and administered to him a lot of Elixir, reviving him.

An amount that originally should have killed him immediately was restrained by the strength of his will.

—

[Something like strength that possesses no will would only invite ruin. While you possess a genius to the degree that is envied by other people, you averted your eyes from that truth. That is your mistake.]

—

Fugil who appeared there introduced himself for the first time and granted the Divine Drag-Ride Leviathan to Singlen.

[If it's you, surely you can change this country. You can even burn the rot of this country until the root and build a new foundation.]

Fugil left behind those words to Singlen who didn't try to get involved with politics. Then years passed.

Singlen chipped off the kingdom's military strength, created the White Ridge knight order, then used a Ruin's horn flute, Abyss, and Elixir that he obtained from other countries to skillfully cause domestic conflict.

Abnormal events that couldn't be managed inside the country. The nobles and chief vassals of the kingdom were dying one after another.

Like that the national strength was weakening remarkably and the country even lost negotiating power with other countries.

The king and others didn't notice that the Blackend Kingdom itself had been remade into a state where it needed Singlen's strength no matter what.

—

And then—now.

At the site of the old castle where the fight was halted, Fugil and Singlen were facing each other.

"—I see. So that's the reason for you guiding that foolish little brother."

"There are multiple countries existing, and furthermore their relationships are confrontational. If one rules inside a country, then he will have to control the outside of the country too at the same time. That is my wish, a ruling system by the Drag-Knights."

Singlen lifted the corner of his lips into a grin at Fugil's question.

The picture of the future that he once displayed to Lux and the others too.

He was saying that he would make an independent system by the Drag-Knights that was different from the existing countries and influential people, restore the world and lead it to peace.

If he obtained Avalon in the battle this time, even that pipe dream would become reality.

If he won over Lux and the other Seven Dragon Paladins and used them as his hands and feet, he would surely put all countries under his rule for real.

If that was his scheme, then the intention of Singlen who was staying in the post of a general until Avalon was discovered became clear.

If his plan was to create an independent new system, becoming something like a king of a country would only shackle him where he had no freedom to act instead.

Thus, he was remaining in obscurity and waited for the chance.

Until then he polished his own fang, strengthened his organization, and laid out his schemes here and there.

"So that's your answer—it's splendid, my sworn friend."

Fugil's lips formed a dry smile while his face was staying blank.

"You were guided by Sacred Eclipse and grew. Certainly you have the qualification to become the core of history. You can show me how you obtain the seat of the king in the battle after the world is remade."

"Hou? Are you saying you cannot promptly decide in front of the current me? That there is an opponent that is worthy to contend against me?"

When Singlen said so while jerking his chin, Fugil quietly kept a watchful eye on him.

"—There is, the weak who wish for salvation. That person has no talent in fighting like you, and he cannot even speak out his own sin, even so there is such person who is struggling in their effort to live. The Sacred Eclipse is finding others who also have the qualifications to stand as the core of history."

Fugil said that and looked at Singlen's eyes in the end.

"But, if your disposition and resolve are the real thing, surely you will manage to repulse that weak person. Besides, due to the Baptism that was applied to your body, one day you will also recover your memory even in the remade world. In essence it can be said that you are in the advantage. After all you have displayed that you personified the caliber of the ideal king in this era."

"——"

Singlen's return.

But, hearing the content of the conversation that he exchanged with Fugil, Magialca and Aeryl who were lying down on the ground, as well as the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins whose armors were dispelled while their breathing was also faint were overwhelmed by the heartless reality.

In the end, Singlen would move following Fugil's plan. It was the same as though he was joining hands with Fugil. Such fact was made clear here.

An absolute ruler which governed the flow of the world existed, which was Fugil. And Singlen who obeyed him would obtain Avalon after this.

Magialca and others would completely forget this fact in the world that would be remade or something.

A way to resist,

Even the thought of trying to resist,

The will to pick up the sword on their own, anything and everything, all would—

"I see, I'm glad I can hear that. Then without reservation allow me to become it, the core that you wished for—that caliber of king or whatever."

—

GIGIGI.....BAKI-! BAGIBAKIBAKIiII-!

—

The mechanical sound that was audible intermittently from underground stopped, changing into a sound of destruction of metal being crushed.

The sound of destruction came consecutively and got louder. The Automata's voice reported the abnormality.

".....! Emergency situation. Avalon's internal devices are destroyed. The main cause seem to be ice creeping from the ventilation opening."

"What.....?"

Fugil expressed a bit of suspicion without a single twitch on his eyebrows.

His gaze glanced at Singlen's face. It took less than a second until he moved to attack from there.

Faster than that, the Howling Roar that Singlen's Leviathan unleashed sent Fugil and Bahamut flying.

".....What?"

Due to the change in world's rule by Endless, attack that wasn't accompanied by physical substance would be neutralized in this area.

But, Singlen used Leviathan's Divine Raiment Lining to blow out water that possessed physical substance with Howling Roar's high pressure, spreading out that power.

Although he was taken by surprise, Fugil also didn't stay quiet.

He immediately rallied his posture, made Bahamut's back wings shined, and flew forward.

He brandished his jet black great sword and slashed towards Singlen.

But, in that instant around Singlen who was wearing Leviathan, countless light frames that displayed the Drag-Ride's system that was called tuning floated up.

"—Senjin – Ruten"

The instant the great sword came into contact, a force field of barrier was formed in front of Leviathan from right to left.

That flow of power parried Bahamut's sword tip and deflected it. Singlen then half rotated his body.

He added the parried strength to mow down his large Blade into Fugil's back.

"——"

Bahamut's back wings were destroyed by the counterattack.

Fugil lost his propulsion device and was sent flying. Water surged from Leviathan's surroundings towards Fugil.

"Shin Senjin Gouka—Mizuchi."

Water thinly covered Leviathan's armor.

Water stream was controlled by the Divine Raiment to stretch out from the armor to along the sword tip. It emitted high pressure like a blade.

But, it didn't hit Fugil who was unbalanced. His figure vanished.

"Zero One!? So he escaped, be careful tyrant! That guy—"

Magialca who saw that desperately wrung out her voice into a yell.

Even though Fugil escaped to another space, the main body of Ouroboros behind him was remaining.

If Fugil gave an order using mind control operation before he vanished using Zero One, Arshalia would carry out the order.

Just as predicted, the gigantic Blade that was like a steel tower that Ouroboros possessed was swung down toward Singlen as though to split the ground together with him.

"Shin Senjin Ruten—Ungai."

A great amount of water floated around Singlen.

The water wall that was controlled by Lining whirled like a storm and formed a defensive membrane.

When the sword's tip was slightly diverted and avoided, the sword unleashed a slash with its returning movement.

"Shin Senjin Gouka—Mizuchi."

Singlen's eye glint pierced Arshalia. The water blade severed the armored arm of Ouroboros that was like a fortress.

The gigantic arm fell on the ground with a thunderous crash. The impact shook the ground in the area.

[—Medium damage to Ouroboros. Repair, start.....no, it's impossible.]

The robotic voice of Arshalia paused in the middle.

The collapsed Aerial witnessed the reason why that threatening regeneration function was sealed.

"The water that attacked just now immediately became ice.....!?"

The water severed Ouroboros's right arm and then coiled around the severed part. It then instantly froze, hindering the armor's repair as well as sealing the movement at the same time.

Looking closer it wasn't just the arm, the joints in the whole body of the Artifact were hardened by ice.

"What an, unbelievable guy yeah..... Did he, hide his true strength, until now....."

The water control using Lining wasn't only able to change liquid into gas, it could also change liquid into solid matter.

But, the other members were shocked because until now Singlen had never shown such free application of the Divine Raiment in the battles until now.

"—Reload on Fire."

Ouroboros cancelled Zero One and Fugil appeared. He slashed at Singlen with a single leap.

The target of Reload on Fire was Ouroboros's main body that was towering behind.

He exchanged slashes with Leviatan and then took distance to the back for the moment.

"—What are you planning? Well, I guess I don't even need to ask that, but let me hear it before I kill you, Blue Tyrant."

It was a cruel tone.

Fugil was directing a gaze that was filled with hostility that would freeze the one on its receiving end towards the Blue Tyrant.

In response Singlen smiled derisively and dispassionately told a different answer.

"Oh? Has even your head become senile, my sworn friend? You haven't even noticed such trivial thing? You see, before this I entered the central of Avalon together with your little brother. I controlled water through the ventilation and destroyed the internal mechanism. With this the so called remaking of the world will become impossible for a while. Even the change of world's rule using Endless cannot go as far as stopping the water of this me."

"....."

Singlen spoke out a different answer to the question with his usual haughty and arrogant smile.

The abnormality that occurred in the control room just now.

Fugil's intuition that told him it was caused by an attack from Singlen was correct, but—

"Let me say this too, you made one more miss. Just now you used Reload on Fire to compress and strengthen heat, it seems you are trying to melt the frozen part of Ouroboros in the latter five seconds but—you have lived that long and you didn't notice? If water is frozen the volume will increase."

BAKIKIKII.....!

Right after Singlen's words, the limbs of Ouroboros that was towering behind were getting destroyed with a strange noise.

Just as Singlen described just now, because water was further poured into the insides of the frozen joint parts, it bloated up at the inside due to the low temperature and the ice broke the parts.

That was to say, that was Singlen's prediction—because Fugil attempted to dissolve the ice using compression strengthening on Ouroboros's temperature, it induced destruction in the first five seconds.

[Further damage to Ouroboros. Several minutes will be needed for the thawing until the repair is finished.]

"With this you won't be able to use the troublesome simultaneous attack. If you split your energy into your special armaments or Divine Raiment, even the repair of Ouroboros's main body won't go well you know?"

"—Let me ask you one more time, Singlen."

Fugil's superiority was crumbling after a brief exchange, even so it was as though there was no change at all in his complexion and he asked.

"Do you understand what you are doing? If you don't do anything, you will be the one with the highest probability of obtaining everything. The rule that is your ideal will be possible, but why did you discard it yourself?"

It was Fugil's pure question that pushed aside his emotion.

In response to that, Singlen replied with a smile of bottomless ecstasy.

"That's because you and Sacred Eclipse are unnecessary. Therefore, die. I won't obey anyone. I won't place myself under anybody. I won't tolerate getting made to get along with your idiotic act of self-satisfaction. My answer—is only that!"

Singlen's single jet black eye snapped wide open and Leviathan skated forward.

Accepting the challenge, Fugil also flew his Bahamut in a forward charge and swung his great sword widely.

Part 5

The battle of the two unfolded fiercely.

At the side, Aeril was slowly lifting up her body.

"Ku, uu....."

There was intense pain as though her bodies would fall into pieces, and the exhaustion that made her dizzy caused her to want to throw in the towel.

But, there was no way she could stay lying down like this.

At the very least she had to wear Zahhak one more time and joined in the fight.

She didn't know what was Singlen's intention, but now that Ouroboros was decently damaged and it was devoting its full strength for repair, this might be their chance of a lifetime to win.

"Looks like both of us managed to survive somehow huh. It's a pain that we are both half-bakedly obstinate yeah."

"Greifer.....?"

The young man with a sullen expression was smiling bitterly at the side while blood was similarly flowing from his whole body.

He pulled Aerial's hand and made her stand, then he presented Zahhak's Sword Device to that hand.

Similarly, all the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins who were defeated and collapsed also struggled to stand up.

Even though they had no spare strength remaining, they were harboring the will to fight.

"It looks like that vice captain-sama was repairing his Leviathan while observing our fight yeah. That guy is really nasty."

"That might be so. But, perhaps that's not all."

Soffice said that while her body was shaking unsteadily. Rosa who was near her reacted curiously at that.

".....What do you mean?"

"Perhaps, the vice captain might have fought with Fugil from before."

Mel added further and she spoke of her own hypothesis.

"Normally it will be impossible to deal with the opponent's hand easily like that even if you know about it. Even if two people are using the same Drag-

Ride, their respective senses and skill will decide the performance. In other words——"

Singlen had experienced the opponent's hand with his own body on one occasion.

Mel was suggesting the possibility of that.

"I see. Perhaps your hypothesis isn't necessarily mistaken. But, no matter what kind of connection there is between that guy and Fugil, what we should do is decided. Lolotte, take care of Lux!"

Magialca filled her unsteady legs with fighting spirit and smiled stout-heartedly.

When she found her servant who was also her aide who was flying to here from the rear——Lolotte, she pointed towards the rubble where Lux was lying down.

"You all too, I won't mind if you withdraw together with Lux you know? You all should be nearly at your limit."

Magialca smiled at them with a bloodstained face.

But, the remaining members each responded back with a fearless smile.

They were saying even without speaking out. That everyone's feelings were the same only right now in this place.

Part 6

"....."

Within his misty consciousness.

Lux was carried on the shoulder of Lolotte's Drake to the rear.

During that time, the extreme mortal combat that was unfolding at the ruins far away was seared into his eyes.

—

"——I see, so you remembered. I knew that you received Baptism at a place that I don't know, but before you also refused to become the vessel of king."

Fugil exchanged attacks with Singlen's Leviathan while muttering with a scornful snicker.

The sight would make anyone to watch in fascination with held breath.

Or perhaps they would shut their eyes while trembling in fear.

The precise finesse that was like a superhuman feat, and the offense and defense from the release of wild strength were scattering sparks fiercely.

Singlen had sealed Ouroboros's main body early and took the advantage, but Fugil who was wearing only Bahamut was fighting back equally or even more against him.

Thinking back, it was only natural with how he was fighting evenly against Magialca and the others just now who were working together, but even more than that, Fugil whose greatest weapon should have been sealed didn't look like he was agitated at all.

The Seven Dragon Paladins who were watching that from afar noticed Fugil's true character.

The strength of Fugil who was maintaining his sanity even after receiving Baptism that was most likely in an absurd amount.

It wasn't something that depended only on that existence and physical ability, but a strength that was backed by a will and resolve for fighting that wouldn't be shaken by anything.

Exactly because of that, they thought that they didn't want to lose.

Because they didn't think that the conviction that they were carrying was inferior against that.

—

" Shin Senjin Midzuki—Amekiri (True Battle Array Moon Reflection — Web Cut)"

Singlen used Leviathan's Divine Raiment, Leaning, to control water and made a thick mist and heavy rain to pour down on the area at the same time.

Within the field of vision where not even a few ml ahead was visible, Singlen sensed the rain's echo to detect Fugil's movement.

It might be possible to ignore the rain using the assistance of Ouroboros's radar, but even that shouldn't be sufficiently usable now because of the main body's repair.

Singlen's decision based on that expectation was effective, he was gradually pressuring Fugil.

With the obstruction of the sight, Bahamut's evasion and defense were delayed by a beat.

Fugil who was reacting by detecting Singlen's presence was also uncommon, but it was only in this situation that Singlen was a step ahead of him.

"—Continuing to save the weak? Sacred Eclipse is the one that makes the judgment for that? Don't you deceive people using sophistry. You only want to feel convinced that you are in the right."

A slash that was enveloped in water stream pierced Bahamut's barrier and smashed apart the armor's surface.

Fugil glided to dodge. His expression while enduring the raging attack didn't show any agitation.

Even now when he was falling into another predicament after overcoming an unfavorable situation, there wasn't the slightest wavering in his control of his Drag-Ride.

"Just what in the world will come from that? Are you only playing god by building and destroying sand castles alone in a place no one knows about? A hero's duty you said? That's what you call the construction of a future in accordance with your thinking as?"

Fugil ascended Bahamut to escape to the sky, but Singlen used Leaning to make waves of water current to use as a foothold to chase after Fugil.

He swept away Bahamut's great sword and unleashed a sharp thrust before his eyes.

—*GAGII!*

Fugil barely covered his shoulder where the Force Core existed, but he couldn't completely block it.

In that instant of offense and defense, Singlen changed the water that landed on the opponent into ice and restrained Fugil's movement.

From above Singlen struck with a Blade that had weight placed on it to press and cut through the opponent.

"With that what will become of you who transcended humanity and obtained almighty power? The one who couldn't save anyone is you yourself right? You foolish hero."

"....."

Fugil didn't even twitch his eyebrows at the slightest towards that provocation.

In exchange he touched Ouroboros's Sword Device and quickly rotated his body to launch a slash.

"That's— Lux-kun's!?"

Aeril who saw that raised an astonished voice spontaneously.

—End Action.

It was a hidden technique that alternately used the two varieties of Drag-Ride control to realize unceasing consecutive attacks.

If Fugil who possessed inhuman physical ability used it, it would surely display a terrifying continuity that spanned for several minutes.

No—more importantly, Fugil was unleashing that technique even while he was under attack and matched the timing to use it as a counter.

The large swords of both sides scattered sparks and within a few seconds dozens of slashes were crossed.

They were displaying an equal battle while Singlen slightly knitted his eyebrows after guessing a single fact.

".....!?"

Even for Singlen it was next to impossible to freeze an opponent that was continuing to move without pause.

At the same time if Bahamut raised its horse-power and produced high heat, it could prevent any freezing.

As though to back up that conjecture, the number of Fugil's attacks was gradually pressuring Singlen.

Every single sword flash was steadily accelerating and it was increasing in fierceness to the degree that the naked eye couldn't follow.

"What, the hell....."

When Greifer muttered in amazement, the consecutive attacks that accelerated like a storm were unleashed.

"Shin Senjin Oudo—Tsuchigumo."

But, while getting overwhelmed by End Action, Singlen laid out a membrane of water on Leviathan's armor.

Water didn't have shape in the liquid state, scattering the impact like a ripple.

The thick water membrane was dispersing the slashes' power along with the barrier. It slightly slowed down the speed of him getting hit, then the flow of the combo was severed by water bullet that was fired out along with Howling Roar.

"——"

"I'll end it. Your meaningless fight, along with that filthy Sacred Eclipse!"

Fugil was thrust away to the back. Singlen made Leviathan skate to pursue him.

He produced thick mist and rain once more and took the stance of pursuing attack, but in that instant—Fugil took an incomprehensible action.

"—Reload on Fire."

Inside the enshrouding white mist, crimson light surged from the black armor.

If it was the average Drag-Knight, that would be a point between life and death that would surely make them on guard against the unknown.

But, a second later Singlen stepped forward without hesitation.

"Shin Senjin Gouka—Mizuchi."

The high pressure water current along the Blade was shot out as the extension of the blade.

The blade of certain death that had energy focused into one point cut through the thick mist and approached Fugil.

But, in that instant. Fugil's Bahamut approached to near Singlen instead and slashed.

"Gah—!?"

A part of Leviathan's armor was cut while avoiding direct hit. Then, Singlen lunged forward in a counter.

Bahamut handled the attack with exquisite angling and a flash of Quick Draw landed on Leviathan's chest.

BIKII-.....!

A crack ran through Leviathan's chest part and the robe Singlen was wearing.....the armor suit was partly destroyed.

The impact shot through Singlen's lean body and he vomited out blood.

".....!? What did Fugil do just now? If he is compressing and strengthening his time, then he should be unable to move fast in the first five seconds, and yet——"

When Mel pointed out with a dubious face, Magialca wiped the blood on her lips and responded.

"If I guessed from the result, then he really was applying the compression strengthening to time. However, it was applied only to the surrounding rain excluding himself."

"What do you mean by that?"

Greifer showed a baffled expression to that. In response Soffice told the answer with a small voice.

"Inside this thick mist, Singlen is sensing the echo of the rain that is controlled by his Divine Raiment to comprehend Fugil's position and movement. In other words if he slowed the pouring down rain around him with Reload on Fire's time acceleration——"

The timing of that echo could be put out of order.

"You mean he is tricking the vice captain and luring him to attack? To be able to think up such idea while getting involved in such a ferocious battle....."

Even Rosa who was skilled in such tactical exchange was astonished by that exquisite feat.

At the same time, all the members who were struggling to return to the front line were harboring a certain thought.

That was how this was similar to Lux.

Lux's many tactics and application of skill that brushed aside every kind of inferiority.

Exactly because they had fought him as an enemy or had continued to witness such feat from nearby that they got such a misapprehension.

Perhaps Fugil had encountered every kind of enemy many times and continued to challenge them until now.

But, such indulgent imagination was crushed instantly.

Because Fugil held Ouroboros's Sword Device before his eyes and quickly thought quietly.

"Over Limit—On"

"—!?"

Seeing that gesture, the Seven Dragon Paladins who were holding their respective Sword Devices shivered.

Light frames whirled around Fugil.

Additional parts were summoned and connected. Bahamut took a new form.

Singlen was sent flying and his movement stiffened from the impact for less than a few seconds.

Fugil finished the process of Over Limit within that slight opening.

[Ouroboros's repair is fifty percent complete. Should it resume battle mode?]

"Don't be concerned Arshalia. You repair the function of the destroyed central and hurry with the preparation of the remaking. It might become something incomplete, but that's fine."

[Acknowledged, master.]

The Automata's robotic voice replied to the order.

Right after that, the atmosphere around Bahamut exploded and the armor flew like a bullet.

It was as though the weight of the additional armor was nonexistent. Black wind that the eye couldn't perceive was rushing.

There were limiters placed on Drag-Rides in consideration for the pilot who was human.

There were also limiters that were restraining the mobile frame so that the Drag-Ride itself wouldn't be destroyed. All of those were taken off.

The crimson light that was surging from the armor turned into flames and the sword gouged the enemy like the fang of a violent dragon.

Dust was whipped up and covered visibility along with the destruction of the armor that was caused by the offense and defense.

The consecutive attacks possessed a might that even his own armor that was attacking couldn't endure it.

Fugil unleashed fierce attacks like a violent dragon, even so every single one of his movements was dispatched with terrifying accuracy and skill.

"Did I touch your nerves? This foolish ruler who pretends to be a hero!"

In response Singlen also fought back with vigor.

Fugil brushed off the thrust of his opponent's Blade. After parrying the momentum his sword returned and ran through under the armpit of Leviathan's armor. Singlen blocked with the Divine Raiment Leaning. He dispersed the impact with a wall of water and the moment the attack stopped, he used his left foot as an axis to rotate and return a sideways sweep to Bahamut's back. Fugil swung up his great sword in a big movement to place the sword's blade on his back as a shield to blocked the attack. At the same time he swung his blade that was enveloped in high density energy with the aim of destroying the enemy's weapon. Singlen made ice trail along the point of contact and derailed Fugil's hand movement. In that instant the great sword that Fugil swung down split the ground and shook the foothold. The tip of his sword instantly flipped and slashed up, attacking Singlen's face. Singlen diverted that with water current and barely dodged, but his forehead was slightly grazed and blood flowed out. Without even any time to comprehend that Fugil's aim was his eye, the next attack was advancing on him.

The wheels of Leviathan's armored legs rotated in high speed and it retreated backward. Fugil went in pursuit, in response blades of water that trailed along the Blade slashed from outside the range. Although Fugil's armor was cut up, he paid it no mind and stepped forward.

Although Bahamut's armor was strengthened, the compensation for the piloting that was too intense squashed the armor with creaking sound.

Right after that, like a bow that was drawn to the very limit, the stocked up strength was released.

—Recoil Burst.

This was a hidden technique of Drag-Ride control that made use of an intentional rampage which was caused due to the contradiction of the two systems of command.

A transcendental might was unleashed with the sacrifice of one's own Drag-Ride and flesh.

—

"——!?"

—

Magialca and the others who were more than 100 ml away were horrified by that scene.

The attack that was unleashed from Over Limit brought a destructive power that was beyond their imagination and pulverized Leviathan.

Singlen also used the defense of Shin Senjin, but Fugil didn't pay any mind to things like damage to himself from the backlash, he simply stabbed the double-edged sword to not let go of the chance to finish off the opponent.

Thus, Fugil himself didn't get out of this unscathed.

The armor of Bahamut that was strengthened by the rampage state crumbled into pieces and the fragments were digging into his limbs.

Despite that, Fugil's eyebrows didn't even twitch.

He stood upright soaked in blood and turned his gaze towards Singlen who was sent flying.

"Does that guy even feel any pain? Just what kind of monster is he, yeah....."

".....No, I don't think that's it. It's only my intuition but, it's not that he isn't feeling pain——"

A calm bearing.

But, Fugil's eye glint that was somewhat hollow made Aeryl to harbor a mysterious thought.

It wasn't that he didn't feel pain, he didn't care about agony.

This man was feeling pain from something else, from a different matter.

Aeril herself didn't really understand why such imagination crossed her mind towards the enemy of her sisters.

"That's right, no one understands it. Arshalia. Those fellows didn't understand a single thing, what you are fighting for, why you were trying to save other people despite possessing everything and able to monopolize them for yourself, they didn't even try to think about it—those people, they weren't human."

It sounded like a monologue.

Or perhaps he was talking to everyone here.

Fugil quietly took a stance with his bloody Sword Device.

"I—was unable to fulfill my promise with you. Why, did I survive that Baptism? Why, did those people betray you who were their benefactor?"

Nothing was reflected on those eyes.

No, there was the face of the Automata called Arshalia there.

"There won't be any answer. In that case I have to continue to ask the world. The end of the line of the Sacred Eclipse that you left behind, the end of the line of the peace that you wished for, I will—"

It was as though he was chasing after that face, and then.

When they realized, the blood flowing out from Fugil was stopping.

When he wiped the blood and threw away his coat, the wound that should be there was vanishing.

"_____"

Greifer and Mel who saw that knitted their eyebrows and held their breath.

They had certainly witnessed the proof that Fugil wasn't a normal human.

Different from a Nocturnal or an Abyss, most likely he was a complete being that had Baptism applied to his whole body.

He was the embodiment of the ideal that the Lords were aiming for.

"Why did you save me? Me who was your enemy, being a hero, it's.....
Why did you try to grant my wish. Why did you wish to save
everything....."

There was nothing in Fugil's expression.

He was simply forming words that were quietly filled with emptiness.

"Let's redo it. Let's destroy this distorted world once more and begin anew.
If I don't give up, surely, I will be able to finally reach it, that is exactly——"

Fugil drew out his Sword Device and lifted it to the sky.

In that instant, the territory of light of seven colors vanished and the light
spread out once more.

—

【——When oneself receives an attack that is unleashed by another person,
they won't receive an attack from another different person.】

—

At the same time the Automata's voice was sent into the brains of Aeryl and
the others once more.

The change of the world's rule by the Divine Raiment of
Ouroboros——Endless.

The content was a rule that prevented the battle of many against one.

Even though they wouldn't be able to even oppose him unless they grouped
up, they were prevented from cooperating.

Conversely Fugil who was alone could act without any limitation at all.

No, a reality that was even more terrifying than that was standing in their
way.

"So it finally revived.....! That damn monstrous Drag-Ride——"

Endless activated once more and Ouroboros took a fighting stance.

The other side could deal attacks of two people by himself alone.

In contrast Magialca and the others had to fight them one by one.

In addition they were already wounded and exhausted. Each of them
wouldn't be able to fight in several more minutes.

[Infinity.....activate. Transferring Bahamut.]

Bahamut that should have been completely destroyed was summoned once more before Fugil's eyes along with Arshalia's monotone voice.

[—Oi, you all. Retreat while you can still move. This time it's serious.]

Magialca who saw that lifted Jormundgandr's Sword Device and deployed the huge Drag-Ride.

She took position in the front and took a stance as though to protect Singlen who had just gotten done in.

"Just what are you prattling huh, captain-sama, did you finally grow senile now?"

"You, the punishment of lese majeste is severe. You can get scolded later by Lolotte. It's what you deserve."

Magialca responded to the exasperated Greifer's loose-lips with a wicked smile.

Rosa guessed the hidden meaning from that short exchange and turned her gaze to them.

"I wonder, is it already absolutely impossible to win with our strength?"

"....."

Aeril swallowed the words that she was going to say.

She and Rosa were of the same opinion. It showed that it was most likely the correct recognition.

Fugil only sent a glance their way and didn't move.

Fugil further summoned Bahamut's additional armor in front of Aeril and the Seven Dragon Paladins who were still unable to reorganize themselves.

"Over Limit—On"

The second Over Limit by Bahamut.

The armor was rearranged along with an intense light, transforming into a form with increased offensive power.

Furthermore Ouroboros behind him applied the support strengthening of special equipment type by pouring down energy.

It was a despair that was piled up over and over again.

Everyone knew from a glance that it was simply a foolish act trying to fight the enemy before their eyes.

"Then, why—are you still fighting?"

When Soffice asked with an emotionless tone, an answer immediately came back.

"It's vexing but, right now that guy is the only possibility. That is necessary in order for me to obtain Avalon."

Magialca sent a glance to the back where Singlen was sent flying to and she smiled.

"You can still say something like that? I can respect even the spirit of a merchant if it goes until that far."

Mel sighed in exasperation, but Magialca didn't look shy at all.

"Naturally. After all I'll be troubled if the effort I piled up is spoiled by this kind of irresponsible device. It will be sayonara if I can just extract enough treasure to replace the funds I used to reach until here. After that my own talent will be plenty enough to take over the whole world."

She talked about her own desire quite indifferently and took a stance along with Jormundgandr.

Four of its huge arms were already destroyed, and her breathing was also in gasps, but it didn't look like there was even a shred of giving up in her.

"Remaking the world? A convenient redo? Such thing is the height of boorishness. A fool who cannot even learn from their own mistake won't arrive at the correct answer for an eternity. That's why I hate it, what that man is doing. That's enough reason to fight."

"——"

The remaining members took a deep breath seeing the fearless smile of Magialca.

They affirmed their will, just for what they were holding the Sword Devices in their grasp, and then——

—

"—Here I go. Reload on Fire."

Fugil lifted his Sword Device and activated Bahamut's Divine Raiment.

The target of the ability was Ouroboros that was towering behind Fugil.

He was planning to compress and strengthen time by dozens of times and switched into offense at the later five seconds when it entered overwhelmingly accelerated state.

"—UooOOOO!"

Instantly Greifer roared and charged forward with Cuelebre's flight.

It already wasn't a situation where cheap tricks would work.

He activated his defense using Photon Dive and accelerated toward Ouroboros's chest in a straight line.

In case Fugil performed compression strengthening on time using Reload on Fire, it would be mostly unmoving in the first five seconds.

Greifer's aim in that case was to deal damage to the main body in that opening and stop Endless.

At the same time he used Photon Dive earlier in order to break Fugil's focus but—

GINN!

The instant Greifer attacked with Tail Blade, Fugil's great sword crushed it.

It was the rewind of the scene they saw before this.

The only weak point of Photon Dive—the effect to disperse the attack wouldn't work only in the case the user was the one moving and touching toward the opponent's weapon. Fugil took advantage of that and destroyed Greifer's armor apart.

"Guh, ga.....!"

If Lisha and the others were here, they would surely notice that it was similar with Critical Hit that Lux mainly used when he was using his Wyvern.

The starting point of the opponent's attack. If the point before the strength was released was crushed, the attack's power would be reflected back toward the enemy as it was. It was a special technique of counterattack.

However, the attack of Bahamut that also used the strengthening of Over Limit had a might that far surpassed that.

The impact instantly pierced through the barrier and blew up Cuelebre's armor from the inside.

Cracks entered the young man's bones here and there and a lump of blood was spat out from his mouth.

It was a decisive defeat.

Even so Greifer pulled out his Sword Device and activated the special armament Mist Cypher.

He obstructed the field of vision using mist that was made from metal particles and even sealed detection using radar.

Even though he understood that it was nothing more than a bit of a hindrance, he desperately hanged on with tenacity.

"So you throw away the fate that was saved by Sacred Eclipse by yourself. You cannot even discover the path that you should follow, in the end you are just a stray dog."

Fugil's gaze was extremely chilly.

But, even while falling with his Divine Drag-Ride destroyed, Greifer lifted his sword towards the heavens with loud determination.

It was though he was thrusting his fang towards the existence standing at a height he wouldn't be able to reach in any way.

As though he was rebelling even against the fate that was guided by Sacred Eclipse.

His consciousness didn't cut off. He was continuing to maintain Mist Cypher's mist of metal particles.

"So what huh? You think I'll just wag my tail after getting fed on a whim? I'm not that vice captain-sama but, I'm also fed up. You can try to kill or rule anyone as you please but—. A human who cannot stomach that..... exists right here!"

At the end he threw Cuelebre's Sword Device towards Fugil who was hovering in midair.

Fugil easily flicked it away using Bahamut's great sword. In that instant lightning pierced through the mist from above and hit.

"—Agreed. I too cannot accept your method. You are the one who possess everything, and know everything there is. To look down on us from above and laugh at our choices, is selfishness."

Vritra's special armament—Vajra.

The satellite weapon floated in the sky and dropped lightning attacks. Soffice also tackled towards Ouroboros along with it.

A Drag-Ride that was hit fully by electric shock would have its movement temporarily restrained.

Thus Mahapurana that Soffice activated next drew in Bahamut while at the same time she stabbed the tip of her Blade towards the opponent's torso.

The pulling power and the power of thrusting to pierce through.

Soffice attacked using all her remaining energy, however, it was defended by Fugil himself instead of Bahamut.

"—!?"

It was no other than the Sword Device of Ouroboros that Fugil drew out himself.

It diverted the tip of the Blade that Soffice lunged with and the direct attack toward the flesh body was averted.

It was unimaginable that the slash of a Divine Drag-Ride was diverted only by a Sword Device and the sword skill of a flesh body. Even the expressionless Soffice looked shocked.

She once more understood with her body that Fugil himself was an inhuman existence that surpassed a Nocturnal. Right after that—

"—To obtain strength, suitable qualifications and caliber are necessary. All of you don't have that."

Fugil who dodged the Blade using godly sword skill told Soffice whisperingly.

After that, he sent his thought into the Sword Device he was holding and a flash of Quick Draw smashed Vritra.

"Ku—a"

Next after Greifer, Soffice was starting to freefall. In order to prevent further attacks towards her, Mel and Ddraig Gwiber attacked Fugil from behind.

"—Dual Shift! Fall down you!"

The Divine Raiment that manipulated temperature.

Mel used it in diverse ways, but in this moment she focused great heat at the part that gave moving power to Bahamut.

Fugil's Bahamut received Soffice's lightning attack before this. Furthermore it was using Over Limit, so the heat of the Force Core was high. Seeing that she took action to make the Drag-Ride overheat.

"—....."

That choice gave result and Bahamut's movement dulled considerably.

But, in that instant Ouroboros that was standing by behind Fugil moved and a flash of the gigantic Blade it lifted directly hit Ddraig Gwiber.

"A, kahah.....!"

The accelerated slash of Ouroboros that was target of Reload on Fire was already unavoidable. She understood that.

She already resolved herself and poured her whole defensive strength into her barrier, but the might of the attack was just too much in a different dimension.

Ddraig Gwiber's armor was crushed, her arm and ribs broke, and intense pain burned her brain.

She crashed onto the ground. Within her hazy consciousness, Mel gripped her Sword Device tightly even then and continued to use Dual Shift.

Although she received a direct hit, she twisted her body and only barely avoided having her Force Core destroyed. She continued to maintain her Divine Raiment.

She avoided instant death from the slash of the super accelerated Ouroboros because of her preeminent senses in Drag-Ride control.

And then, she continued to send heat to restrain Fugil's movement even while she was dying was because of her obstinacy as the youngest Seven Dragon Paladin.

"Mel! Stop it already! You're going to die if you continue to use your Divine Raiment like that!?"

Magialca who saw that called out to her in panic.

In the first place Mel who was young and had low stamina had passed her limit since a long time ago.

Even so she gritted her teeth and endured from losing consciousness.

She received the gaze of Fugil who was looking down on her coldly, even so she didn't back down from it.

"I.....won't recognize, it. I lived in a world where there is no redo..... No matter what kind of unhappiness I met, even if I'm mistaken, something like righteousness can only be found by yourself."

In her childhood, her whole family was slaughtered by the Abyss in her birthplace, the Ymir Theocracy.

Even so holding the pride of her distinguished family in her heart, Mel stood up alone and lived on.

She overcame the death of Orphel who was like her mother, opposed the fate where there was no turning back by any means, and faced her weak heart.

"I, won't recognize it..... I cannot believe someone who did such thing. That's why—I won't lose. Against something like fate that you made to repeat——"

She had been struck down and fell on the ground, prostrating without being able to stand up, even so Mel continued to grasp her Sword Device.

The little remaining armor of Ddraig Gwiber shined. Fugil was restrained by the power of the Divine Raiment.

"Fuh....."

Fugil scoffed. He commanded Ouroboros that was standing behind him.

The Blade that was like an iron tower was swung down once more. In that instant, a huge armor skated forward and blocked it.

Almost at the same time, Mel ran out of strength and lost consciousness.
In front of her, Rosa wearing Gorynych was standing.

BA, GIGIGIGIII.....!

Impact ran through Gorynych along with a thunderous sound. Its two arms that were blocking the slash were smashed up.

But, using the rearranging ability of the Divine Raiment Tartaros Frame, the arms were repaired while grabbing the sword at the same time.

Gorynych grasped the weapon and pulled, and immediately restrained Ouroboros.

Rosa gathered up the parts of Drag-Rides that were destroyed in this place until the limit, and then she combined them all into Devil Machia Mode.

Unlike Fugil, Rosa didn't have anything like superhuman stamina. She spat out blood due to extreme exhaustion, even so a smile surfaced on her lips.

"You said a good thing there, even though you are just a kid."

"Rosa.....!"

Aeril reflexively raised her voice seeing the girl who talked with a sarcastic tone.

Under the power of rule change from Endless, they couldn't attack Fugil and Ouroboros together, but it was possible for more than one person to block their attack.

Even that possibility was a gamble, but Rosa splendidly won the bet.

"No matter how much it get accelerated, it's meaningless if it cannot move. Really unfortunate isn't it"

".....What's the point when you can only buy time for several seconds? Are you okay with squandering here what you finally obtained?"

Right after Fugil spoke coldly, the main cannon that stretched out from Ouroboros's chest was gathering highly dense energy.

It was an overwhelming power that originally needed dozens of seconds until the energy was gathered, but the time acceleration from the compression strengthening made the energy gather with terrific speed.

Even so there was no fear in Rosa's eyes.

The thing that was finally obtained by Rosa who was made to act a false personality.

With that conviction filling her, she burned her life that was going to vanish from holding Fugil back.

"Yes, I'm happyy. I believe that the person who saved me won't betray me. That's why, I'm not feeling scared anymore."

"Kuh—!"

Aeril immediately tied up Mel behind Rosa with her whip and pulled her away.

Less than a second later, Ouroboros's main Cannon fired.

Impact and explosion enveloped the whole field of vision.

The Devil Machia Mode Gorynych that received such might right from the front was smashed up.

"—U, AAAH!"

Aeril let out an agonized scream behind Jormundgandr that Magialca redeployed.

Inside the scorching hell where she couldn't even breathe.

It was a space where if it was human who wasn't wearing a Drag-Ride, their flesh body wouldn't hold and they would not be able to take action. Fugil wearing Bahamut glided through it.

He pieced through the violent storm of dust and leaped to in front of Magialca.

"—Reload on Fire."

Crimson radiance surged from the jet black colored sharp form and covered Magialca's Jormundgandr completely.

No, there was stillness as though the time of everything had stopped.

It was the lead up for Violent Strike that Lux also performed.

It was compression strengthening of time towards the wide area of the surroundings, but what Fugil used was incomparable to that.

Aeril saw Fugil slashing within the space that had been decelerated until the extreme. She was tasting a delusion of having her time being halted.

".....No consideration, huh" (Magialca)

The word that Magialca said just before was burned into Aeryl's brain.

Aeryl burned into her memory the progression of Bahamut hacking Jormundgandr's huge armor into pieces, even so she maintained her will strongly so that her concentration to her Divine Raiment wouldn't be cut off.

(Did I—face this battle for the sake of taking revenge for my elder sister and little sister?)

—No.

Aeryl thought deep inside her heart, that she just didn't want to recognize it.

The people who fought here, not one of them could accept the path of living a life where they had to be subservient to this hero who was also like an inhuman god.

That was a reason worthy for the proud dragon users to risk their lives and fight.

"Ku, u....."

Magialca was letting out a faint groan inside the wide range area that was decelerated to the extreme.

Even while Fugil was one-sidedly attacking fiercely, he was unable to catch sight of Magialca's flesh body.

"—I see. So it's your work."

Fugil's gaze caught Aeryl who was hiding behind Jormundgandr.

With the Divine Raiment of Zahhak that had been destroyed until it couldn't even fly anymore, Aeryl made Fugil to forget the existence of Magialca, which he noticed.

"Ku——!"

Aeryl swung her half destroyed Breath Whip as her last resistance, but it was unquestionably crushed due to the difference in time acceleration.

And then, the instant the attack finished raining down, the remaining five seconds began.

The time accelerated and the impact of slashes that Magialca and the others received struck, radiated, and pierced through their whole body.

The huge armored arms of Jormundgandr were sent flying and destroyed, leaving a single fist behind.

Right after that Ouroboros came pushing and swung up its large sword, it was at that timing a faint voice came from behind.

".....How? I have never given that to you."

Fugil directed an awakened gaze to behind Aeryl and the others.

KIN-! There was the sound of cutting through wind that instantly severed the atmosphere.

In the eyes of Aeryl who was sent flying and got her armor dispelled, the huge silhouette of the resurrected blue dragon was reflected.

"That's——"

The surface of Singlen's body was dyed jet black and red light was emitted from his taken off eye patch.

And then the huge armor that was wrapping his small body was changing form into something bizarre.

"Over Limit....., is it. So that guy also obtained, a trump card——"

Right after that, intense light flickered and ice restrained Ouroboros.

[The internal of Avalon is damaged once more. The remaking a few minutes from now is impossible.]

Arshalia that was staying in the head of Ouroboros informed Fugil once more with a robotic voice.

Leviathan in Over Limit.

It was covered with additional armor and transformed. With its power output that represented its true form, Singlen attacked the control room once more.

"It's natural that you don't know. After all you aren't god or anything. You were unable to see through what I'm doing. Whether it's about how I asked your little brother just a while ago how to do Over Limit too."

"——"

Aeril who saw Singlen's cold smile kept lying down on the ground while guessing the truth from the two's conversation.

Aeril also knew how Lux could use Over Limit only at special situations where he remembered his memory.

And then, now she was seeing Singlen facing Fugil like this, a certain type of conviction was born inside her.

Could it be that this man was intending to defeat Fugil right from the start?

He was trying to invite Lux to enter under his command since some time ago might also be for that, the same with him asking Lux most likely after their decisive battle just before about the method of Over Limit that Fugil never told to him.

That perhaps, at the surface he was acting to realize something like the system of world unification under a country in order to hide his true intention from being perceived.

But,

"—How foolish. Why are you going that far? Are you unable to stomach my mission until that much?"

"Exactly. I cannot stomach it at all, your whole existence."

Singlen who released the strength of Baptism laughed in front of Fugil's chilly gaze towards him.

"You who seriously believes the delusion, that it is salvation for things to move just as you want it. That hubris of thinking that anything and everything can move just as you want it, I cannot tolerate that."

"....."

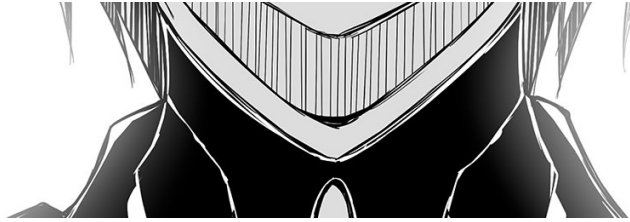
"I also know how you altered history to exert influence to kill my elder sister. No, in your words that is the result of rousing someone who ought to be saved though. It doesn't matter. It's intolerable for me to live in an ideal garden that you fiddle around with. It's so unpleasant that it's better to die. Your existence that is."

".....Fuh"

Fugil scoffed at Singlen's insult.

Right after that, Leviathan dashed with an explosive force that made that large frame punched through the air. It approached towards Bahamut with powerful speed like a bullet and swung the great sword that was enveloped with water current.





Leviathan that had activated Limit Break also increased the power and amount of the water current enveloping its body, furthermore Singlen also placed a great amount of obstacles made from ice around Ouroboros, holding its movements in check.

However, Fugil also wasn't losing.

He avoided lethal attacks using Zero One, and aimed to activate Reload on Fire at pivotal points.

The offense and defense with both sides displaying godlike feats that the eyes couldn't follow anymore were interlacing before Aeryl's eyes.

"Your method of pushing and creating an ideal that doesn't even exist to other people, the selfishness of making me who was not even interested to go along with it, you making me this angry. All of those make you undeserving to live. I'll take away everything you have! And push you down into hell!"

The water current that was controlled with maximum output was giving a boost to Leviathan's movement.

The movement of kicking on the ground and dashing, the movement rotating the body to dodge.

The instant sparks scattered from the exchanged attack, Bahamut's armor froze.

When its back wings were frozen and it fell, the frozen ground clung on the frame and stole its mobility.

Leaning's water control. It not only treated water as a weapon for offense and defense, it also freely controlled liquid and vapor, cornering Bahamut that was in Over Limit state.

But, although Fugil was being pushed back, there was no hesitation in his control of Bahamut.

He avoided lethal attacks with the best movement at the fastest speed and launched counterattacks.

Even while his armor was smashed and gashes were carved onto his body, he was dodging with the shortest motion and then——

"Taking away everything I have, and pushing me into hell you said?"

While he was sent flying and Leviathan's pursuit was incoming, Bahamut's armor shined red.

"——"

Singlen's two eyes opened in alert and he immediately made a wall of ice as a shield.

But, in that instant Bahamut's slash easily broke through the defense and cut apart Leviathan's armor.

"——Gah!"

Singlen's left arm was sent flying along with the armor. Leviathan was smashed apart into pieces.

"——Reload on Fire. I applied compression strengthening to hardness and made the endurance of everything around into less than a tenth."

Originally it was the later five seconds that needed to be watched out at the process of compression strengthening, but if the first five seconds——the dampening effect was utilized, the target would receive weakening effect.

Singlen who was at an advantage stopped his attack and immediately switched into defense because in the previous battle, the counter of Lux who used the neutralization of pain for counterattack had been imprinted into his consciousness.

That battle that was held inside Avalon was also monitored.

Fugil had grasped what happened in that battle, using that he took advantage at the opening in Singlen's consciousness.

In this extreme situation, Fugil surpassed Singlen in pure tactics of offense and defense and obtained victory——wasn't what happened.

"—It's you who got caught, damn idiot."

Crimson eyes opened glaringly and the blood soaked demon laughed.

In that instant, Fugil noticed his position.

Right beside him, Magialca and Jormundgandr was drawing back the last remaining huge mechanical arm, and unleashed a full powered punch towards Bahamut.

Instantly, the Divine Raiment's magic circle sparkled and a proportion of the damage she received until now was put into the attack, creating the maximum destructive power.

"—Hell Tempest!"

Impact burst out and explosion blast swallowed the area.

Jormundgandr's strike was hardened by dozens of times due to the compression strengthening from the Reload on Fire that Fugil activated.

The fist screwed into the inside, causing the impact to permeate until the interior of the body due to the martial art's unique stance of punching. Even if for example the Drag-Ride wasn't smashed, Fugil would surely die from this.

It wasn't like Magialca and Singlen had made arrangements in advance to cooperate with each other in this predicament.

A coincidence. No, it was unknown who was the one who started it, but their bodies moved as though hailing each other and their breathing were unknowingly harmonizing with each other.

Normally their relationship was like cat and dog that were impossible to get along with each other, but they were in agreement at the single point of wishing to defeat Fugil.

".....How foolish, hero-dono. What do you think a human is? Do you intend to make them into works of art that is put into a frame as decoration? Or as treasured pets with prestigious pedigree?"

"It's laughable that you who obtained everything with money are saying that."

Singlen whose left arm was severed along with the armored arm was standing up while holding a sword with his remaining right hand.

Despite his lethal wound that was gushing out blood, he called out to Magialca with a jesting grin.

"That's the fruit of pure effort. A tyrant like you has no right to criticize it."

In response Magialca also insulted back with gasping breath while keeping her gaze nailed on Fugil.

"But Fugil. Your method is even more intolerable. You see, you are imposing on humans. In your mouth you are speaking about saving the weak while deciding that they have to be existences that is worthy to be saved. Then you are choosing and recreating the world many times so that they become like that."

Even Jormundgandr's fist was cracking due to the backlash of the impact of punching with the backing of the highest level of Hell Tempest.

Even that last remaining weapon was already unable to display its function satisfactorily.

Fugil was standing up unsteadily. Behind him the armor of the restrained Ouroboros was shining.

The attack just now only half landed. Bahamut was safe and Fugil too was maintaining a composed mind although he was vomiting blood a bit.

Magialca and Singlen noticed that the reason for that was due to the support of Ouroboros behind him that was obstructing them.

Just now, Ouroboros attacked Bahamut from behind.

Therefore Magialca's attack was neutralized by Endless's rule change.

—

【—When oneself receives an attack that is unleashed by another person, they won't receive an attack from another different person.】

—

The world's rule that was continuing to be activated since some time ago due to Ouroboros's Endless.

Magialca had tested with Aeryl secretly before, would the rule of impossible to attack be applicable in case someone attacked their own self.

The result of the experiment was, it was impossible.

Thus Magialca attacked Fugil with confidence, but the attack that Fugil launched towards himself through Ouroboros was the water blade of Singlen that he turned into off state using Zero One.

[Attack, unleashed, by other person]

Because the original starting point of the water blade was Singlen's Leviathan, even though it was an attack that was received from Zero One turning it on, the rule change was applied to it.

[Doesn't, receive]

In other words even though Magialca's attack landed, Fugil didn't receive its effect at all.

It wasn't a simple distortion of physical law. So to speak, it was a change of phenomenon.

Magialca comprehended once more how Ouroboros was the strongest and greatest Artifact.

And then, that instantaneous thinking capacity to immediately launch water blades from Ouroboros behind him after predicting Magialca's attack slightly ahead.

But, even with all the chances of victory running out, she had no intention of backing off here.

The determination that was dwelling in Magialca's chest provided no option of surrendering.

"—I, love them. People's selfishness, ugliness, and even their biased desires. All of those things that you disdained and try to erase from this world."

"That's exactly why I have to fulfill my mission. Humans cannot control themselves with determination. On the surface they wish for freedom and peace while they are obsessed with their own self-interest and drag other people into ruin. Therefore—the world has to be managed. Her and I have lived until now for the sake of that."

In response Fugil calmly drove Bahamut and approached in front of Magialca.

The armor was damaged and stained with blood due to the blade of water that hit him.

Even so not even a single flaw could be seen from his movement.

There was also no hesitation towards his own conviction.

"Fuh..... Human is half an animal. Even the thinking that oneself is right is a selfish hubris. Of course evil also exists. But you see, imposing something like an ideal that you believe has to exist no matter what towards the whole of mankind is just wrong! Know that it's evil to not even understand what you are stealing!"

Magialca drew out her Sword Device and put all her strength into her grip.

The last remaining armored arm of Jormundgandr unleashed a full powered straight punch that was added with a twisting motion. At the same time Singlen also fired water blade from the tip of his broken Blade.

Fugil flew while dodging all of them in a hair's breadth and landed a flash of sword into Jormundgandr's remaining armor to pierce through it.

Magialca received the backlash from that impact and blood spurted out from her whole body.

Even so a peaceful smile was emerging on her lips.

"Looks like.....I can stay free until the very end. I'll leave the rest to you Lux, and also my favorite pupil."

The small statured body that was like a girl powerlessly crumbled down to the ground.

Beside her, Ouroboros that was reigning behind Fugil skewered Singlen and Leviathan with the tip of the giant Blade that was like a steel tower.

".....Pushing me into hell? Since that day more than a thousand years ago, my hell has been continuing all this time."

A tone that was filled with emptiness.

The completely freezing gaze was directed to Singlen's corpse and Fugil spoke.

"That Sacred Eclipse and Arshalia, they should be able to save the world. This distorted repeating cycle, the chain of unhappiness should be severed. They were trying to save everyone. All of you are unable to reach until that far. That's all there is to it."

"—Hah"

Singlen died with Sword Device in hand while he kept showing his smile. Fugil felt like a laughing voice suddenly leaked out from him.

"Farewell Singlen Shelbrit, the vessel of a king who I recognized."

After speaking the words of parting, the robotic voice of the Automata Arshalia called out to Fugil from Ouroboros behind him.

[Due to the regeneration of the destroyed mechanism and Ouroboros's battle, the energy has become insufficient. It will be incomplete but, will we still carry out the world's remaking using Endless here?]

"—Yeah, Sacred Eclipse is already choosing the next vessel. We have to make this battle to come to an end on this occasion and usher in a new peace."

[Understood, my master.]

Fugil dispelled Bahamut and he was teleported to the center of Avalon.

A few hours after that.

Intense light covered the world with the old castle site in the abandoned capital of Guernica as the center.

Epilogue – Reality(Nightmare) You Cannot Wake Up From

Part 1

"—Nii-san, please wake up. It's morning already."

A graceful voice tickled his ears.

A small hand shook his body slowly. Lux opened his eyes.

This place was the Royal Capital's castle town—one of the rooms that they reserved.

He was staying here with everyone from the Academy in order to participate in the New Years Parade.

"—!?"

Suddenly a strange uneasiness welled up inside Lux. He looked around the room he was in.

Inside the tidy room that was cleaned really well, there were furniture that weren't gaudy but also weren't dreary.

There was nothing strange at all.

Was the strange scene he was seeing until just now an illusion—a dream that he was seeing?

"Even so it's really unusual. Nii-san who always wakes up early didn't wake up even from the sound of the fireworks. Are you still tired?"

Airi stood on her tiptoe and peered into the face of Lux who was going to change his clothes.

The words his adorable little sister spoke got caught within Lux's mind.

"The sound of fireworks, you say?"

Lux asked back in bewilderment.

Come to think of it, there were fireworks resounding in the early morning of the parade's first day.

The same like the previous time, and also the time before that.

(Resounding.....was it?)

No, he remembered that previously there was such sound, but today he felt like there wasn't anything like that.

At the very least Lux didn't hear any sound or anything.

(Previously.....? Today is.....? What am I thinking?)

Even though today should be his first time welcoming the morning of the three days of the parade, he had a conviction that he heard this sound previously. That strange out-of-place feeling made him dizzy.

He washed his face and changed clothes, then had breakfast in the dining hall at the inn's first floor.

The inn was reserved, and it wasn't like all the students of the Academy came, but as expected, the place was cramped because there was a lot of them.

Amidst that, the Triad who were eating together with him let out their dissatisfaction.

"The breakfast is too few..... Even though I'm the type who eats a lot in the morning—"

Tillfur was peering into the soup's bowl with a sorrowful voice.

Sharis who was watching that from the side smiled wryly and chided her as the eldest.

"That's bad manners Tillfur. With this I'm worried not just for the parade's security, but also for the commendation awards on the last day."

"Yes. The inn's staff were also apologizing. They are rushing around to gather ingredients that are running out earlier than expected, so it seems that it will be solved at night."

"At night, it will be the party already then ain't it? I want to eat in the morning y'know!"

Noct acted calm and composed like usual while Tillfur was booing childishly.

The Triad's conversation was somewhat charming to watch, but it strangely caught Lux's attention.

"But, certainly the amount is too few. The menu is the same but, it's only half of previously."

Lux looked at the amount of breakfast lined up on the table and tilted his head.

Airi who heard that was poking at Lux's shoulder with a gaze as though she was looking at something strange.

"Nii-san, you speak as though you have come here once before to eat. Are you still half-asleep? Geez."

"I won't last, if I don't eat snacks too..... Lu-chan, you want to eat sweets later too?"

Philuffy was expressionless and at her own pace like usual, but as expected it seemed that her empty stomach was winning, she was giving off a sad looking atmosphere.

"It's okay to give me if you have leftovers. I'm not that hungry after all, Phi-chan, eat it for yourself."

Lux sent her a smile and presented his bacon and eggs to her, but Philuffy endured even while wavering.

"More importantly, did you hear it Phi-chan? The sounds of fireworks this morning."

".....No. I also didn't hear it, at all."

When he took the opportunity to bring it up, he unexpectedly received such reply.

—Strange.

Due to the effect of the Abyss's seed that was planted inside Philuffy, her physical ability and five senses far surpassed the average person. In other words, her hearing too.

(Is she still that tired just as expected?)

By the way he also tried asking the Triad and the other members of Syvalles, but it seemed they heard the firework sound clearly.

"Geez, even Philuffy-san is still half-asleep. Please don't fall asleep in the middle of the parade okay?"

Airi sighed with an uneasy stare.

Lux smiled wryly in awkwardness while eating his breakfast.

The peaceful time was passing by twice as fast than usual.

—

On the first day of the parade that celebrated the new year, the royal family was going around the castle town together with the marching of the soldiers.

Naturally Lux also accompanied Lisha. They were acting together throughout the morning.

After that, they safely finished the greeting to the people using horse carriage for a total of four hours. He returned to the inn and took rest inside the room together with his girl classmates.

There would be a party in the castle on the second day, tomorrow.

There he would be able to reunite with Krulcifer, Celis, Aeryl, and the Seven Dragon Paladins who came as state guests.

Everyone safely survived despite being present on that battlefield.

It had been two weeks since he last saw them, he was looking forward to the reunion.

But, the business for today was over with this.

A party would begin with everyone in the Academy at the large bar that Relie reserved for them.

He went to the toilet before departing there and when he was going to return to his room, he heard a voice.

"—Everyone is safe? You too are a heartless man huh, chore boy."

".....-!?"

Lux turned to look behind him towards that boldly mocking voice.

He was at the second floor's open corridor where the evening's red sunlight was shining in.

A man wearing a black coat was standing there as though he had crawled out from the darkness.

"You are——"

The vice captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, the Blue Tyrant Singlen Shelbrit.

Two weeks ago, this man tried to monopolize Avalon at the abandoned capital Guernica and he dueled with him in order to stop his ambition, and then——

"Why are you here.....is that what you are going to ask? You are foolish like usual huh, chore boy. Is that all you are going to ask me?"

Singlen walked towards Lux with a sarcastic smile directed to him.

His body was small and thin contrary to that arrogant and haughty attitude, but he emitted a heavy pressure that made anyone hesitate to contact him carelessly.

"You still haven't noticed? Although you have received Baptism, the will to resist is necessary. As long as you are accepting this peaceful world, the curse of perception won't be dispelled."

"....."

He didn't understand the meaning of the words Singlen was saying.

Despite that, he didn't feel like discontinuing the talk like usual.

(That's right. I heard the story from this man. After dueling Singlen in the control room of Avalon, the words I heard from him——)

—

[.....Thirty seconds remaining until we are sent out from here. As a prize for defeating me once, I'll teach you the truth. What will happen from now on, when you are trying to follow the same path like me in the past.]

—

That's right. Singlen certainly said that.

However—— he was unable to remember the essential conversation.

Just by thinking about it, his mind was getting hazy.

"Do you want to run away, into the dream that you wished for? But, if you don't notice it will end here you know? You will only walk the same fate like me without understanding at all what is happening."

"The same fate, like you?"

"You should have seen it. The incident happening behind the scenes of this parade. And then, you should know it. Just like how you were once asked to become the key to bring about the equilibrium. How you were roused to become one of the pawns to push up the great man Count Atismata."

He got a headache when he was trying to dig up his memory.

"What are, you saying? You are.....—!?"

He suddenly felt a strange presence.

No, Lux smelled an offensive smell and he grimaced.

"What are you doing alone Lux-chi? You were really late, are you feeling bad—"

The voice of Tillfur who came from behind caused Lux to be taken aback.

At that instant, Singlen's figure in front of him suddenly vanished.

"No, I'm only a bit tired. I'll go to feel the wind for a bit."

Lux left those words and got out of the inn.

His back was pushed by a strange out-of-place feeling and he started running through the streets in the evening.

He followed the same path like last night towards the direction the strange smell was coming through the wind.

"Oo! Isn't this the hero-dono! You are going to fall if you are so hurried like that."

"Are you getting summoned by the princess? Don't go so fast like that okay?"

A middle-aged man with an unshaven face and bulky physique. A headstrong housewife in her thirties.

The people of the castle town who he passed by on the main street were calling out to Lux smilingly when they saw him.

He weaved through the back alley and went through the road in a straight line, and then—he found the corpses of many soldiers.

A great amount of bloodstains, and rubble that were piled up high.

The wreckages of broken Drag-Rides and corpses that were buried crudely.

The arm that was sticking out graphically from under the ground. It didn't even catch the attention of the passing people.

As though there was nothing there from the start.

As though there was nothing existing there.

"Sieg Kreutzer....."

That's right.

Yesterday this man was killed by the Automatons here.

"Why!? How am I—no, everyone in this country is repeating the same parade? This should be something that happened yesterday. And yet..... why did everyone hear the sounds of fireworks!?"

The man called Waybra was killed inside the castle on the last day of the first parade of the time before the last time.

And then, yesterday the little brother of Balzerite, Sieg Kreutzer was also killed.

Why—they were the only ones who were killed by the Automatons?

And then, why did no one notice?

"Don't make me keep repeating the same things, chore boy. Are you still going to bother me even when it's this late in the game?"

Singlen was standing inside the darkness of the evening when he turned around.

Within the hustle and bustle of the passing by people, there was a cat that ran through Singlen's body.

As though there was nothing there since the beginning.

"You should have known if it's you, someone who followed the same path like me and had gone through Baptism three times. Just what this is. Who is the one that is trying to do something?"

".....-!?"

Rewind, redo.

That's right. Five years ago, when he thought that Philufy who was kidnapped for human experimentation died, Lux who became desperate abandoned the whole plan of the revolution—when he was going to head to strike down the Emperor, the world was rewound.

And then, at the second time Airi was taken hostage due to the information from the betrayer and they were almost killed by the Emperor.

That was why, that time the world was rewound again.

The same like right now in order to make the world follow the history where the Old Empire was destroyed and the new equilibrium was made—

"It's not simple for the power of the weak to overturn the system. To beat the stronghold of the strong and maintain the equilibrium, the era has to be changed. The central personage for that—what that guy called as the candidate to be the core of history numbered more than one. That guy found me at the Blackend Kingdom in the past, while in this country he selected that great man Count Atismata whoever and you."

—Revolution.

The existence who became the core that changed the trend of the one-sided strength of the strong.

Lux who possessed the will and resolve for that was made to grow, and when he was about to go off the rail, he was corrected.

In order to guide the Old Empire five years ago to the fate of destruction.

"Have you realized? Have you remembered? Then now you can suffer a lot. Go rot and fall and break in the miniature garden of the fictitious world that you said."

Singlen left those words behind and his figure melted into the dusk and vanished.

And then Lux remembered everything. He ran towards the castle of the New Kingdom that was towering high in the distance.

Part 2

The cheers of the people were carried by the wind towards the New Kingdom's castle.

Inside the audience hall of the castle that was from the reconstructed Old Empire's castle, Queen Raffi was sitting with her eyes closed.

Beside her, there was no figure of her aide Prime Minister Nulph.

In exchange there was another figure.

"It seems that currently the people of the other countries aren't scheming anything. It will depend on the conference regarding Avalon from here on, but perhaps it will end without any meddling from them."

The face of Queen Raffi who was saying that was showing a relieved smile.

"What's left is—only to eradicate the source of that recording. This parade is already rewound twice. Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer have been eliminated. Now that the true identity of the person who made a deal with him is known, the future will be in our hands without problem in the next rewind."

Right beside Queen Raffi, a man wearing a magnificent cloak was standing. He was an existence that possessed an intimidating air that pressured other people and an eye glint like a beast.

"The future where you safely rule the New Kingdom as it is. You who are standing on the side of the weak are chosen by Sacred Eclipse. You have the qualifications to become the core of this country, and to further guide this world to balance."

"I'm grateful to you. Waybra was my lover in the past. I told him the plan of my brother in order to protect him and let him escape. For that fact to get recorded by a Drake—. If that fact became known by the populace, I won't be able to live anymore in this world."

The queen muttered with a transient smile.

She was directing a grateful feeling towards the hero called Fugil who saved her.

"Then, should we carry out the next Baptism? Two weeks have passed since then, you are steadily adapting to it. Surely it will become possible for you to even fuse with Sacred Eclipse if some more time passes."

"Please..... If peace can be brought to this country with that—I will even become evil. It's for the sake of women like me, who were persecuted until now by the men, by the people of the Old Empire."

Her eyes wavered with uneasiness, but there wasn't any hesitation there anymore.

She reached out her hand towards the Automata beside her with determination to personally walk on the path of sin in her heart.

"There is only one more thing left. If I can confirm Prime Minister Nulph's true intentions, then all will be well for the time being. It will be great if he isn't trying to threaten me but——"

Those were the words of someone who was resolved.

A weak person who turned the world into an enemy and fell into a difficult situation where they were forced to walk the path of fabricated righteousness due to their birth.

Such person was led by the hero and embarked on a new path.

Part 3

"Fugil..... You.....! Don't tell me——!?"

Lux who sensed the presence let out a bewildered voice and looked up at the towering castle of justice.

The man who was standing on the terrace that was jutting out from the castle displayed a smile that was like a curse and spoke to his little brother below.

"Did you recover your memory? Then you can choose. Will you turn her into an enemy in order to save the people? You who are the knight of that princess, try to destroy and save this country once more, hero."

The jet black smile shook up Lux's heart.

On the castle's parapet, Sacred Eclipse that was covered with an ominous miasma was standing and looking down on the hustle and bustle of the parade.

Afterword

Long time no see.

This is Akatsuki Senri who is recently getting caught in using ginger medicated baths (bathing powder).

—

This work, too, finally arrived at the grand stage of the fifteenth volume.

If my memory serves me right, I think I started in the year 2013, so it will be more than five years already from now since I started writing this series.

That I am able to continue until this far is solely thanks to everyone.

Thank you very much.

—

The letters in the light novel are easy to write, but drawing everything with pictures in the manga is really difficult.

Thank you very much for doing a thorough job of it for a long time.

I'm borrowing this place to say my thanks to Watanabe-sama who composes the manga, and Tadauchi-sama who draws the pictures.

—

The original version is also approaching the climax, so I will also work hard here.

—

This volume is the continuation of the battle in the previous volume 14, it's the end of the Seven Dragon Paladins arc, and it's also the volume that is the beginning of the New Kingdom arc.

The first volumes 1-5 were like the Academy arc.

The [estimate] is that the new kingdom arc will generally be the same in length.

—

Thinking really really carefully, the retrieving of the flags from around volume 1-5 are finally starting, but it's really amazing that it can reach until here if I do say so myself. This is solely thanks to everyone (second time).

—

Well then it's the corner for thanks.

Kasuga Ayumu-sama who is in charge of illustrations. Thank you very much this time for the amazing illustrations in the midst of your busy time.

My editor M-sama. Thank you very much for your usual corrections with the manuscript. Please take care of me from here on too.

—

Well then, I pray that we will be able to meet again in the next volume.

—

A certain day in April 2018 Akatsuki Senri

Credits

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